

PS2

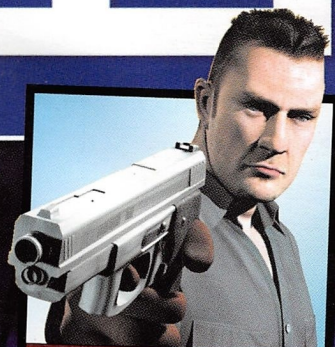
MASSIVE REVIEW

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TOMORROW

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DEVIL MAY CRY
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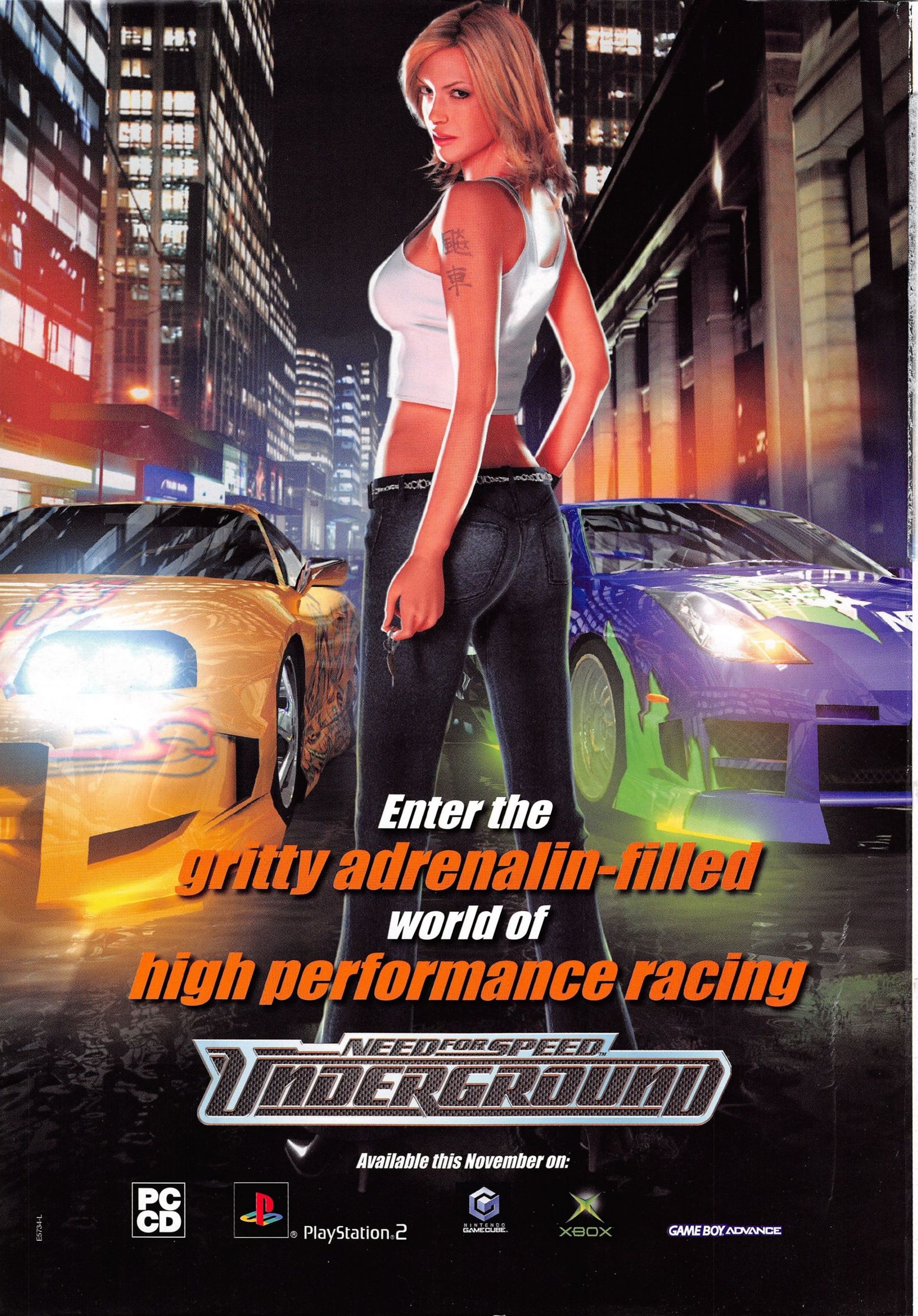
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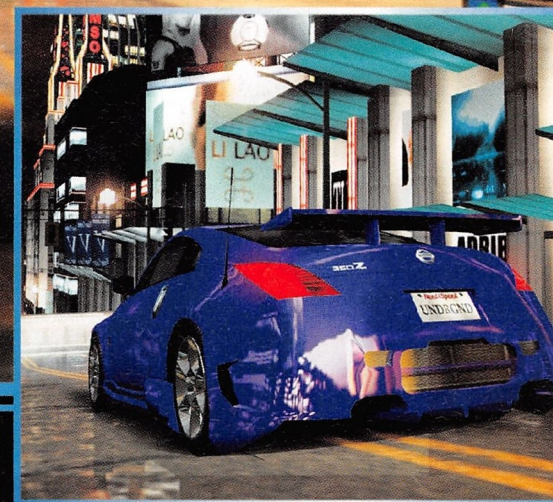
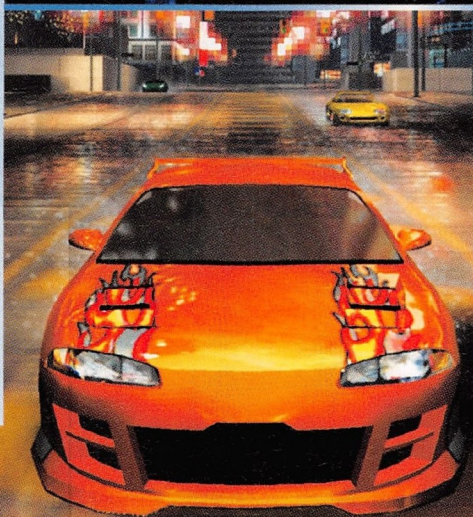
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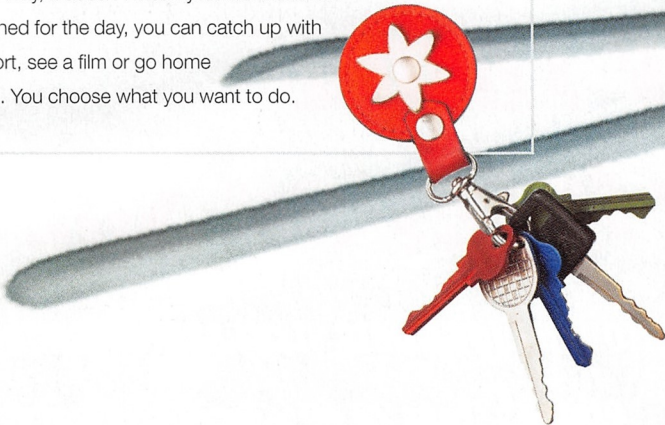


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And to think your mates get

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UNMATCHED BENEFITS

NO PRIOR EXPERIENCE

PROMOTION OPPORTUNITIES

TEAM ENVIRONMENT

ARMY TRADES

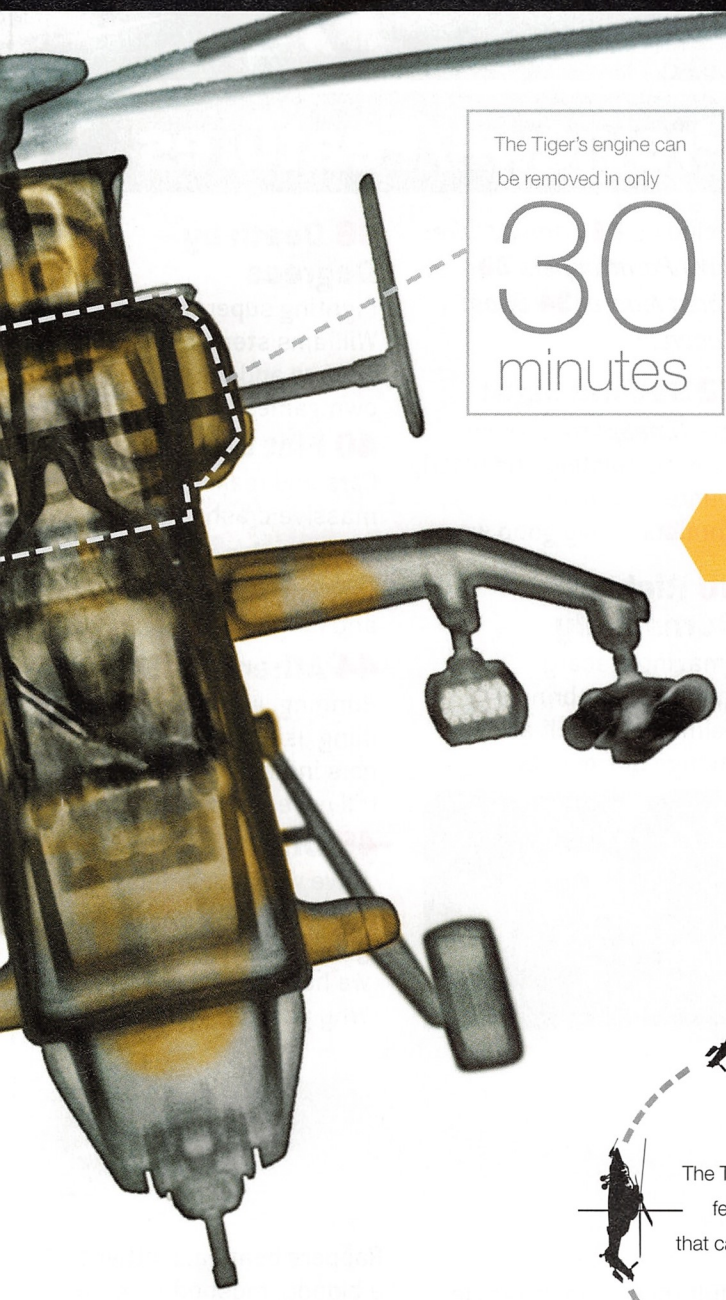
Aircraft Technician	* Fitter Armament
Avionics Technician	* Plumber
Aircraft Life Support Fitter	* Technician Electronic Telecommunications Systems
Aircraft Structural Fitter	Technician Telecommunications Systems
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30
minutes

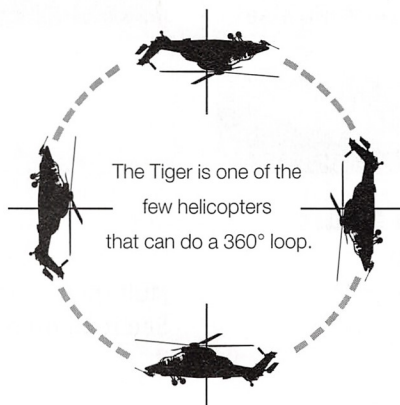
The Tiger's exterior panels are composed of honeycomb shaped fireproof Nomex with a carbon and Kevlar skin.

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Engines	2 MTU Turbomeca 960kw each
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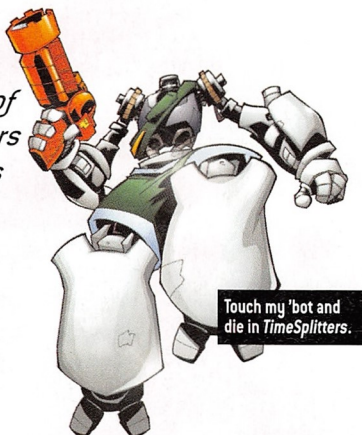


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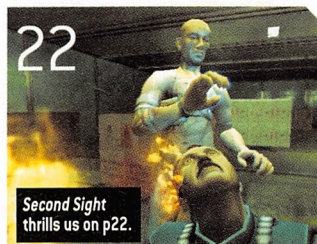
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Onimusha 3

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PSW WELCOME

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EDITORIAL

I would like to begin this editorial by expressing my heartfelt gratitude to Sony Computer Entertainment Australia for depositing large sums of money into my bank account every month in accordance with our agreement. I would also like to thank Atari, Activision, THQ and every other Australian game distributor that has sent me expensive gifts in exchange for favourable reviews, previews and news coverage. Owen from Ubi Soft gets especially big ups in this regard - cheers for the strippers, dude! What a coincidence that *Pandora Tomorrow* actually turned out to be a pretty decent game, huh?

And now let's come back to reality. You know reality, right? It's the place where game critics aren't funded by enormous multinational software corporations. It's the place where previews, reviews and news articles contain opinions unadulterated by gifts, giveaways or goodies. It's the place where all the misconceptions you've ever had about games journalism are shown to be exactly that - misconceptions.

The biggest misconception I've noticed from my correspondence with (mostly angry) readers is the one satirised above: the notion that games journos are the regular recipients of cash and goods in exchange for favourable coverage. I can tell you right now that developers, distributors, publishers and PR companies don't pay us off to rant and rave about their games. The specialist press simply isn't that *important*.

I won't go into exact figures, but the number of people that read games mags like this one is entirely insignificant compared to the number of people who actually go out and buy games. What do you think the ratio of PSW readers to Australian PS2 owners is? 50%? 40%? Maybe 20%? Not even close. The fact is that games magazines are niche products and you are probably part of the niche market they cater to - that of the hardcore gamer.

What's a hardcore gamer? For the purpose of this discussion, it's someone who doesn't really figure all that prominently in the overall scheme of console software sales. Hardcore gamers habitually make a minority of titles reasonably successful, but constitute a measly minority of the consumers that fuel cashcow megahits like *The Sims*, *Need for Speed* and *Eyeday*. These titles would have been successful with or without the support of the hardcore demographic and its attendant specialist press.

Nobody has or is going to pay us to say nice things about their games because it's simply not worth the money. Hardcore games are limited return investments regardless of what we have to say about them. Massmarket games are going to succeed or fail whether we praise them or not. Ultimately, the only people who really care about our opinions are you guys - our readers. And there's no way in hell we'd jeopardise that for a few measly bucks.

/ DANIEL STAINES

Breaking news from the sweatiest games show on the planet.



FIRST AGAIN!

PSW TAKES E3 BY STORM

All the latest news from the monster game show!



SO WHAT THE HELL IS E3 THEN?

Well, for magazines such as ours, it represents the most important three days in the calendar year. For those three days every game developer, software publisher, journalist and joystick maker descend on the Los Angeles Convention Centre to check out the very latest in video games. Games that are almost finished, games that are barely halfway there, games that don't even exist, games that probably shouldn't exist... and some joysticks. It's unbearably hot, it's full of fat-faced Americans, spotty game twats and horny booth girls. It's a pretty brutal combination.

But it's all worth it to see exactly what games we'll be playing in the rest of 2004 and way, way beyond. Many of those games you'll see scattered over the following ten pages; highlights include the new *Lord of the Rings*, *Devil May Cry 3*, *TimeSplitters Future Perfect*, *Prince of Persia 2* and *The Urbz*. But that's just a taster of things to come.

Next month we'll have even more: *Grand Theft Auto San Andreas*, *Midnight Club 3*, *Metal Gear Solid 3: Snake Eater*, *State of Emergency 2* and literally hundreds more in both the magazine and DVD. You really wouldn't want to miss it.



Did Tolkien invent troll drummers, or did EA do it?

WE WANT IT

LORD OF THE RINGS: THE THIRD AGE

The entire trilogy becomes one game in *The Lord of the Rings: The Third Age*. Think you could do better than Frodo? Step up!

GAMES GIANT ELECTRONIC ARTS HAS DITCHED THE HACK AND slash gameplay of earlier *The Lord of the Rings* games in favour of traditional role-playing for this year's stunning new instalment. And judging by our world exclusive screenshots, we're in for something special.

Condensing over nine hours of film into one game isn't exactly an enviable task, especially with so many stories in different locations running concurrently and hundreds of characters doing their own thing. The developer is getting around the problem by creating new characters not seen in the films for you to control and mingle with the major heroes and villains. Separate quests and side quests will overlap only those major scenes from the movies that push the story on, so you might take a different route through the Mines of Moria but still end up facing the Balrog, or you could end up defending a

section of Helm's Deep, Osgiliath or Minas Tirith away from Aragorn, Legolas, Gimli and Gandalf.

You'll basically be weaving in and out of the Fellowship's story, either fighting next to or behind the group of nine as you strive to destroy the ring, though there are unlockable scenes in which you fight on Sauron's side too.

With the films big on epic fight scenes as well as smaller skirmishes such as the battle against the Wargs in *The Two Towers* the slower, more thoughtful turn-based system should prevent battles from becoming too chaotic. You'll even be able to ride a horse in Rohan.

There's also something different planned for those transitions from film footage to the game itself that were so classy in *The Two Towers* and *The Return of the King* games. Expect to see locations from the movies, plus new ones created specifically for the game in keeping with Tolkien's Middle Earth.

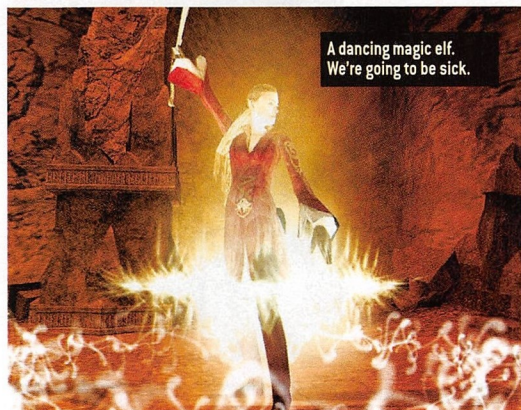


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GOLDENEYE ROGUE AGENT™



Just remember – don't cross the streams, right?



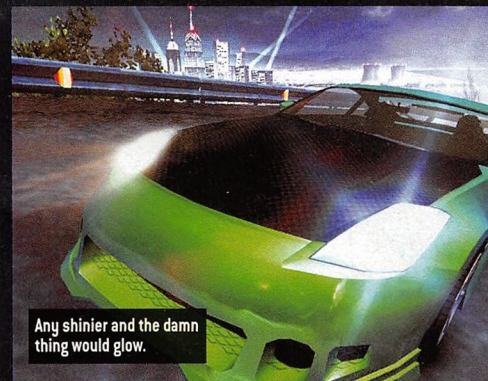
A dancing magic elf. We're going to be sick.



It's all looking a bit *Final Fantasy* from up here...



Our money's on the scaly one, not the ickle pixie.



Any shinier and the damn thing would glow.

MUCH 2 FAST

NEED FOR SPEED UNDERGROUND 2 BREAKS COVER!

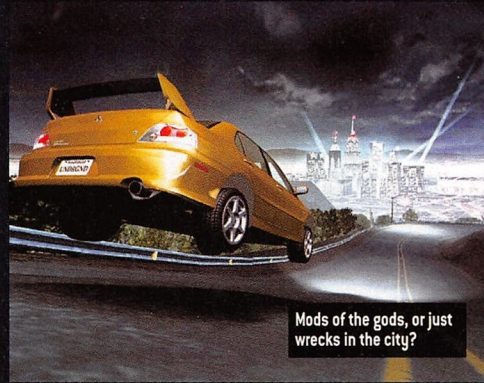
The racing sequel will be longer, broader, wider and more shiny!

SPEND MOST OF YOUR WEEKENDS AT HALFORDS

browsing stick-on extras for your Vauxhall Astra? Then *Need For Speed Underground 2* is the game for you. Building on the huge success of last year's *NFS*, the sequel boasts a new open-ended city split into five neighbourhoods, from suburban to off-shore areas, and is roughly three times larger than the original. The previous city consisted of a selection of inter-connected tracks, but now you can drive through every street and roam the complex freeway system. Shorter, technical courses lead into more underground-style tracks before broadening into those trademark wide-open spaces.

Instead of quitting out of the game to select a new race, the idea is that you explore areas on the map that are open until you come across a challenge that takes your fancy. It's this picking and choosing that should make the game less linear. Some rival drivers will even initiate events themselves, as well as tipping you off about the best racing spots and the latest performance upgrades.

It's this modding culture that the sequel is keen to delve into. There are twice as many upgrades available as before and a staggering 70 billion combinations for the 30 licensed motors. All the single-player modes are playable online, as well as a few extra ones that have yet to be revealed. Throw in an all-new replay feature and *NFS Underground 2* should keep petrol-heads off the streets this November.



Mods of the gods, or just wrecks in the city?



Dante as a little lad. Inne cute though, eh ladies?



Will DMC3 mark a return to the first game's glory?



Dante unleashes sparkly death on hell's minions...



...And finishes with a dose of hot lead fury.

SLAY IT AGAIN

LADY KILLER!

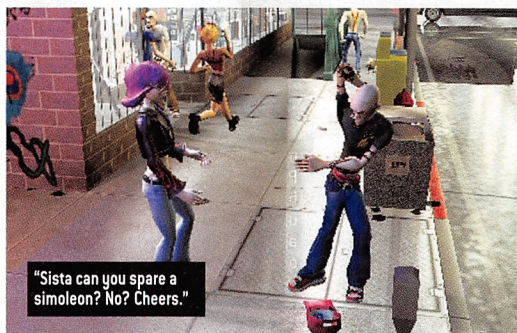
Who'd have thought Dante would have an evil twin brother and a slayer nemesis? Only the makers of *Devil May Cry 3*, that's who!

ACROBATIC DEMON BOY DANTE IS SET

to return in *Devil May Cry 3*. Set before previous instalments, *DMC3* features a younger, more dapper Dante plus his evil brother; Virgil. Alongside the frantic wall-walking combat and aerial battles, the third game in the legendary series will introduce a new 'style' system which

allows Dante to choose attack strategies. So, in addition to broadsword swinging and ferocious gunplay, long-range attacks and even stealth attacks will be used to fight the demon minions and beat your unfortunately named brother. To decrease your chances of surviving even further, a rock hard Buffy style demon slayer will

appear at several points throughout the game to challenge Dante in hectic boss battles. The last game let us down by taking the tension down a notch, so we're keeping our fingers crossed for a return to form here. Needless to say, we'll bring you a great big full preview along with the first ever DVD footage next issue.



"Sista can you spare a simoleon? No? Cheers."



Even the weather looks more grimy in *The Urbz*.

SIM SHADY

SIMS GO BLING!

The Urbz: Sims in the City is *The Sims* with edge. But can it really shatter that bland, middle-American *Sims* vibe? Here's hoping...

AFTER THE SIMS: BUSTIN' OUT! LAST YEAR, IT WAS

decided that *The Sims* needed a more grown-up name that fits in with living among the big bright lights of the city. Hence *The Urbz*; a collection of stylish, spunky puppets under your control with ridiculous names such as Tiny and Skid. The only way to access the nine culturally diverse districts, influence other Urbz and effectively complete the game is to build up your reputation through job promotions, appearing on billboards and posters, and unlocking celebrity and VIP areas. Anything that makes your Urb famous increases his notoriety and gives him a following.

Two features immediately mark the game out from *The Sims*. The first is that there'll be less fannying around wiping your Urb's arse every time he goes to the toilet, which should let you get on with the more interesting stuff. The second is the fact that you're in

control of your Urb 24/7, including twitch mini-games for job challenges in work areas such as a sushi bar. This direct control also extends to skill-building tasks and the way you interact with other Urbz.

The increasing trend for using the EyeToy in games other than Karaoke titles is supported here too. The gizmo lets you download your image into the game, so that as your reputation grows your ugly mug gets plastered over more and more objects. One for the ego-trippers there.

We're quietly excited about *The Urbz*, but we're betting that however 'street' it gets, you won't be able to enact some of the more questionable urban pursuits (pimping and dealing, anyone?) Still, we'll have much more on *The Urbz: Sims in the City* before its release in November.



Everything looks a bit more grisly this time.

That's not the world's smallest boss, then...



RE-RE-WIND

PRINCE GOES BACK IN TIME

Time travelling, demon slaying, hostage taking, enemy splitting, bullet timing, pirate slaying... it can only be the sequel to *Prince of Persia*!

ONE OF THE BEST PLATFORMERS OF

2003 is to get a sequel, and the good news is that *Prince of Persia 2* aims to improve on the original. This time the prince is heading further back in time to fight for his life and break the curse cast upon him by an evil incarnation of fate called Dahaka. Rather than castle combat, the game is now based upon islands and on demon-filled pirate ships. The prince has some fancy new moves too and can now hold enemies hostage,

perform attacks while running up walls and creep even more quietly than before. Elsewhere, the arcade dynamics of the original game are continued; you'll still be able to chop enemies in two. The new take on the time-warping theme means that the prince can decrease the speed of everything around him while moving at normal speed. Also promised are new long-range weapons and the biggest bosses ever seen on PS2. This is going to be huge – stick with *PSW* for more.



We can't wait to try the Prince's new moves.



TUSK TILL DAWN

ELEPHANT OUTBREAK!

Elephants, zombies and spooks galore. Welcome back to *Resident Evil Outbreak File #2*.

OKAY, WE KNOW THIS ISN'T LIKELY TO

please you as you haven't even had a chance to play *Resident Evil Outbreak* yet, but a sequel is already in the works. Yes, you read that right. *Resident Evil Outbreak* is due in September but this sequel won't reach you until late 2005 at the earliest. Again, the focus is on online play and cooperative team work between your character and a host of unfortunate but willing volunteers. The original cast of eight public citizens is back and there's more terror afoot in Raccoon City as the outbreak virus continues to spread faster than SARS in a hurricane. Even the local

Raccoon City Zoo is hit with the evil virus, turning all the animals into super-charged *Evil Dead* attractions. Most impressive of all is the screen-swallowing elephant on show here. There's so many animals loose in the town, it's like a modern day *Jurassic Park*. Online play hasn't been confirmed for PAL territories as yet but Capcom is hopeful that it will happen [this time]. And like the first game, up to three computer-controlled characters can help you out in your quest for survival. Expect a review of the original *Resident Evil Outbreak* very soon and a preview of *Resident Evil Outbreak File #2* next issue.

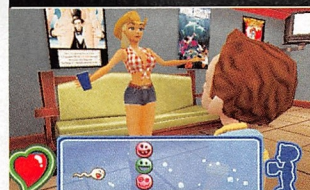


Run like the wind and evade the trunk of terror.



INSIDER

EVEN MORE GAMING GOODNESS FROM E3



CUM DANCING

In the '80s and '90s *Leisure Suit Larry* starred as a lecherous hero in a series of near-the-knuckle games. Now the series has been reinvented in all three dimensions, expect to see plenty of trademark innuendo and womanising. Larry rudeness coming your way in October.



TY ME KANGAROO DOWN, SPORT

EA's Aussie-themed platform mascot *Ty the Tasmanian Tiger* is coming back for a second adventure. And this time it's with the help of a team of robots that can destroy the evil Boss Cass's minions. It'll face stiff competition from *Crash* (below) when it lands this September.



TWIN WHEN YOU'RE FLINGING

Crash Twinsanity sees the loon-faced marsupial Crash Bandicoot return to PS2, this time with his old enemy as his new weapon. Crash has teamed up with Cortex to form a powerful apple-snaffling duo – flinging each other around to destroy enemies and reach entirely new areas. Smart.



ROCKY ROAD TO VICTORY

Rocky Legends takes the characters from the first *Rocky* game and gives them much more depth. You'll now get to guide Apollo Creed, Clubber Lang, and Ivan Drago through their respective trips to the top. *Rocky Legends* is out in November.



TOMMY BOYS

GRITTY GORE WAR GOES PS2

Top developer begins work on *Brothers In Arms* — the most realistic war game ever!

SINCE THE SUCCESS OF THE MEDAL OF HONOR SERIES, glitzy war titles have been all the rage on PS2. *Brothers in Arms* hopes to replace this cinematic sparkle with a dose of gritty realism. Developer Gearbox — responsible for creating *Halo* on PC — is hard at work crafting a *Rainbow Six* style World War II epic. Controlling a squad of four soldiers, you'll see the lips of your comrades quiver in fear as enemies hide, scream and even beg for mercy. Based on a true story, the plot follows the lives of 20 soldiers scattered across the French countryside in a last-minute air drop. *Brothers in Arms* is at pains to recreate the struggle of each soldier. Alongside grim scenes of butchered comrades, it also features original in-game effects to further charge up the atmosphere. For example, get caught up in a bomb blast and the screen starts to swirl, simulating blurry concussion. We know that feeling. *Brothers in Arms* should be with us this September.



EYE JOY

SEGA GOES EYETOY CRAZY

Sonic the Hedgehog, *Virtua Fighter* and *EyeToy* come together in *Sega SuperStars*. Not to mention a whole lot of zombies and a monkey!

SONIC THE HEDGEHOG, SAMBA de Amigo, *House of the Dead* and *Virtua Fighter* are just some of the well-loved video game names coming en masse to PlayStation2 in *Sega SuperStars*, the latest and

most promising EyeToy title we've seen in ages. The idea of actually touching some of our favourite Sega icons directly on our television screens — and hitting others in the face — is almost too much to take, yet Sega is set to do just that with the company's first game for the innovative device.

Beyond the titles shown here, it remains to be seen exactly what Sega has planned for camera gizmo, but we can't help but get excited by the idea of one of the world's most respected developers

going mental on the EyeToy. We love the EyeToy's potential, but we've yet to see a title really take advantage of it beyond simple party games. If anyone can do it, Sega can, with its peerless development teams and enviable list of iconic games characters.

All the pieces are in place; here's hoping we see something brand new and really special from the uber-developer. We'll have more on this next month.



X APPEAL

X-MEN UNITED

Create your own squad of mutant superheroes in *X-Men: Legends*.

WHAT BETTER WAY TO SETTLE NERDY ARGUMENTS ABOUT

who'd win in a fight between Wolverine and Mystique than assembling your own team of X-Men to battle Magneto's army of mutants? That's what happens in *X-Men: Legends*. You can take up to four characters into a level from a roll call of 15 and assume direct control of each one at will. It's an adventure game that sees you using the mutants' powers in novel situations.

For example, in the level that's set inside the bowels of a ship you can use Iceman to freeze water to create ice bridges and extinguish fires. Or Storm to whip up a hurricane and blow the fires out. Or have Nightcrawler teleport to a set of controls that switch off the flames. The options are extensive and should make playing through the same level with another team very different.

So far *X-Men: Legends* looks loud, colourful... and also a bit difficult to see what's going on half the time with so many powers being fired back and forth. *X-Men Legends* arrives in November.



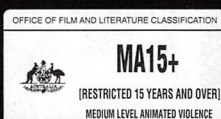
RED DEAD REVOLVER



OUT NOW



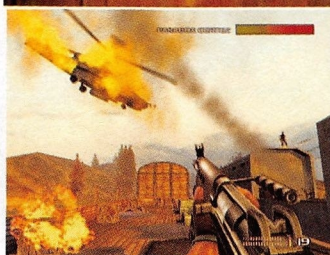
 WWW.ROCKSTARGAMES.COM/REDDEADREVOLVER 



PlayStation 2



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ONLINE ACTION

TIMESPLITTERS FUTURE PERFECT



TimeSplitters finally goes online – but is there a shake-up of the single-player game too?

CRACKING MULTIPLAYER ACTION BUT ONLY OK WHEN going solo kinda sums up *TimeSplitters* to date. After online play was contentiously canned for *TimeSplitters 2*, news reaches us that *TimeSplitters Future Perfect* will support up to 16 players online. And if the PS2 hard drive ever makes it to these shores you'll even be able to grab levels created by fans using the built-in map-maker.

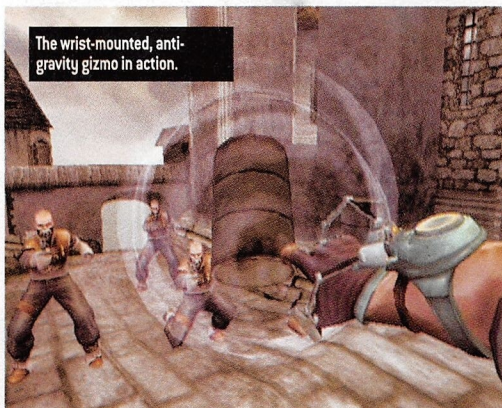
The single-player game will again feature a time travel plot that's really just an excuse to stitch together a random collection of levels – not that we're complaining. There are 11 in total covering five time periods, including a level set on a train in 1969, a haunted mansion set in 1994, and two levels set in future technology labs.

One of our favourites is the second level that takes you back to 1924 Scotland in order to discover the history of the time crystals. The British Navy are trying to infiltrate a castle and you team up with old favourite Captain Ash, who also provides most of this mission's comic relief. There's a vintage scripted moment when the front of a building topples on him, only for the Cap'n to be stood where the glassless window frame lands.

Vehicles are a major new addition for both modes. You can take the wheel or use the mounted weapon on the back, with the action switching to a third-person view. Whichever you choose, Captain Ash fills the other role and it should be a big hit in the two-player cooperative mode.

There are more than 20 weapons to choose from this time, as well as one or two gadgets that seem to have strayed over from developer Free Radical's other big game, *Second Sight* (for more on that, take a squiz at our preview on p.22). One's an anti-gravity device that looks like a wristwatch. This nifty contraption allows you to pick up objects to throw at enemies, hover them in front of your character as cover, or pull levers from afar such as when a bridge needs activating.

They're the kind of features that the single-player Story mode desperately needs, and can only improve the already brilliant multiplayer games. We'll see if the future really is perfect early in 2005.



STEP BACK IN TIME

We travel back in time to revisit the first three *TimeSplitters* titles.



TIMESPLITTERS

Released just as PS2 was starting out, we were all amazed at this highly polished shooter and its ace cartoonish graphics that ran smoother than a silkworm's undies. Playing on your own was a bit of a bore though.



TIMESPLITTERS 2

Listening to fans, developer Free Radical added a cooperative mode, improved the graphics and tweaked the map editor. However, the more in-depth single player campaign mode still failed to rock everyone's world.



TIMESPLITTERS 3

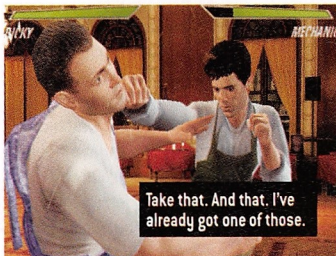
Revamped for the online age, the new *'Splitters* is a force to be reckoned with. As well as internet play, there are new weapons to get to grips with, including anti-gravity gizmos. The ability to ride in vehicles is also introduced.



BROKEN BONES

FIGHT CLUB SNAPS LIMBS

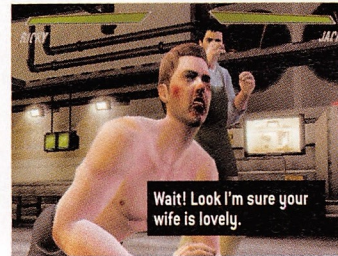
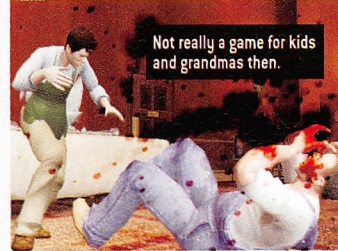
There's no sign of Brad Pitt yet, but there are plenty of broken bones, twisted limbs and blood. Welcome to *Fight Club*.



FIGHT CLUB CAME OUT AGES AGO, DIDN'T IT?

Considering what an absolute no-brainer making a fighting game out of a film called *Fight Club* is, it's still taken a helluva lot of time for a game to punch its way out of the development studio.

Playing as an unnamed member of the underground bruise club, the game promises to feature real-time damage that'll limit your attacks as you get more



beaten up. Destructible environments are also at your disposal for you to smash up using only your opponent's head.

The developer claims that the fighting engine is the most brutal and realistic yet. You'll be able to smash people's faces to a bloody pulp and break their bones clean in two. And when you do, you'll be treated to an x-ray close-up of the limb snapping. The perfect Xmas Christmas game then.



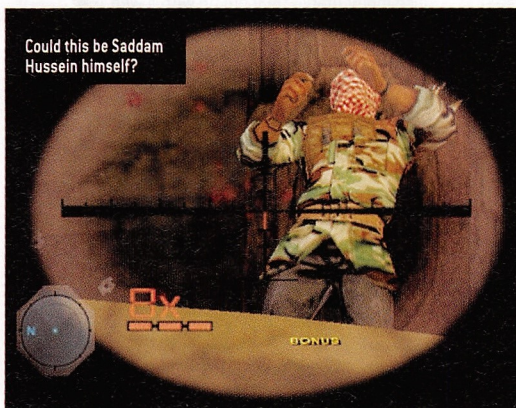
BOUNTY HUNT

MOST WANTED KEEPS IT REAL

America's *Ten Most Wanted* is marching towards our retail shelves - flee in horror!

AMERICA'S TEN MOST WANTED SHOWS THAT IT HASN'T

exactly toned things down with these tough new screenshots before its release next month. The game that's based on taking out the real-life foes of the FBI won't be pulling any punches, with sniping and fistfighting part of your terrorist-killing arsenal. Of course, the ethical sensibilities of releasing a game like this in times like these isn't touched upon at all...



INSIDER

MORE BITE-SIZED CHUNKS FROM E3.



BIRD AND A WIRE

Red Ninja: End of Honor is an action title that has you playing as the demure yet curvaceous Kurenai - a nice young lady who also happens to be a deadly ninja. She uses a wire to carry out her kills, and is apparently fond of using seduction to get her way. It'll be out by the end of the year.



STICK TO THE FORMULA

Sony's unveiled the latest game in its racing series: *Formula One 04*. Packed with all the new official updates - ten teams, 20 drivers and 18 circuits, plus new tracks in Bahrain and Shanghai. It's out at the end of June, and an online laptime board is also promised.



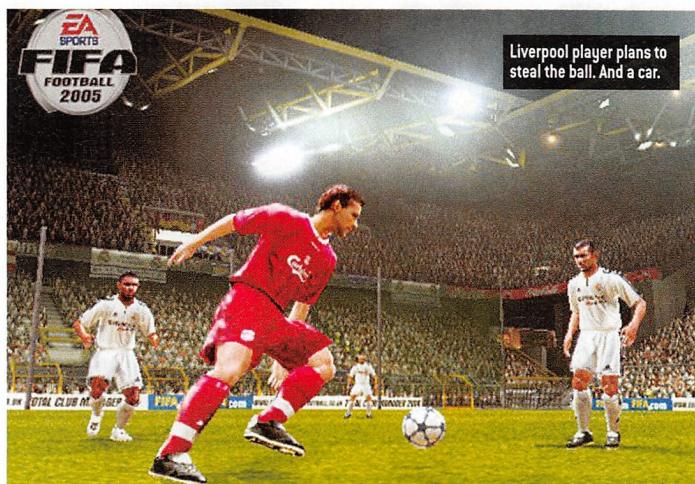
RETURN OF THE DRAC

The purple-headed monster is back in *Spyro: A Hero's Tail*. Targeted squarely at the sticky-fingered child gaming market, the new and improved *Spyro* will be winging its way to PS2 by November. In time for everyone's gran to buy it as a Christmas pressie instead of *Burnout 3*. Duh.



STICK AROUND

At last, a film that actually *needed* a game. Publisher Vivendi has signed up the rights to *Predator* and is creating an action game based on the movie. We're hoping you'll be able to play as the alien hunter as well as the humans. We'll see next year.



OFF THE BALL?

FIFA 2005 GETS NEW KIT

The fiddly control system has been completely overhauled for *FIFA 2005* with the emphasis on fast-flowing, immediate football. Should *Pro Evo 3* be quaking in its boots?

FIFA'S RETURN IS THE LEAST SHOCKING NEWS OF THE season, but its biggest transfer coup could be the introduction of a new first touch system designed to improve both players' control and passing.

They're two of the biggest bones we've had to pick with the series over the years. With a better first touch, players will knock the ball out from under their feet, ready to pass it or go on a run. They'll also let the ball run past or through their legs before latching onto it, whereas before they'd collect the ball with their back to goal, take a

couple of touches to get it under control and then turn. By which time a defender from the opposing team would have nipped in and stolen it.

We've played *FIFA 2005* and the system does work a lot better, though there's obviously a big difference between knocking the ball around in neat triangles at the back, and slotting a defence-splitting pass through the opposition back four, watching as your number 10 gets onto the ball and shoots first time. There's also another cool feature that lets you nod or chest a ball down into

another player's path to tee them up for a shot.

Those who complain that the *FIFA* games neglect teams outside the Premiership can now use a create-a-player feature to hone those lower league likenesses. Each modification changes a DNA code chain, which can then be posted to websites and forums for other players to type in and see the results. The jury's still out on whether all this will make a big enough difference to put the frighteners on *Pro Evolution Soccer 3*, but we'll know the verdict in October.



SPIDER STYLE

SPIDEY'S SPIN ON *GTA*

Like *Vice City*, you'll be able to explore every inch of Manhattan as the geeky web-slinger in *Spider-Man 2* and even take on side-missions.

THAT'S RIGHT. THE WEB OF INFLUENCE SPUN BY *GTA* has even spread to this sequel based on the upcoming summer blockbuster.

As Spidey you can now sling and swing to just about any point in the city. You don't even have to complete the main storyline, which follows the movie's plot – Dr. Octopus and all – as well as being padded-out with supervillains such as Mysterio from the comics. We're still anticipating a virtual Kirsten Dunst complete with pixel perfect breasts but, in the meantime, the addition of comic book characters should keep most Spidey fans happy.

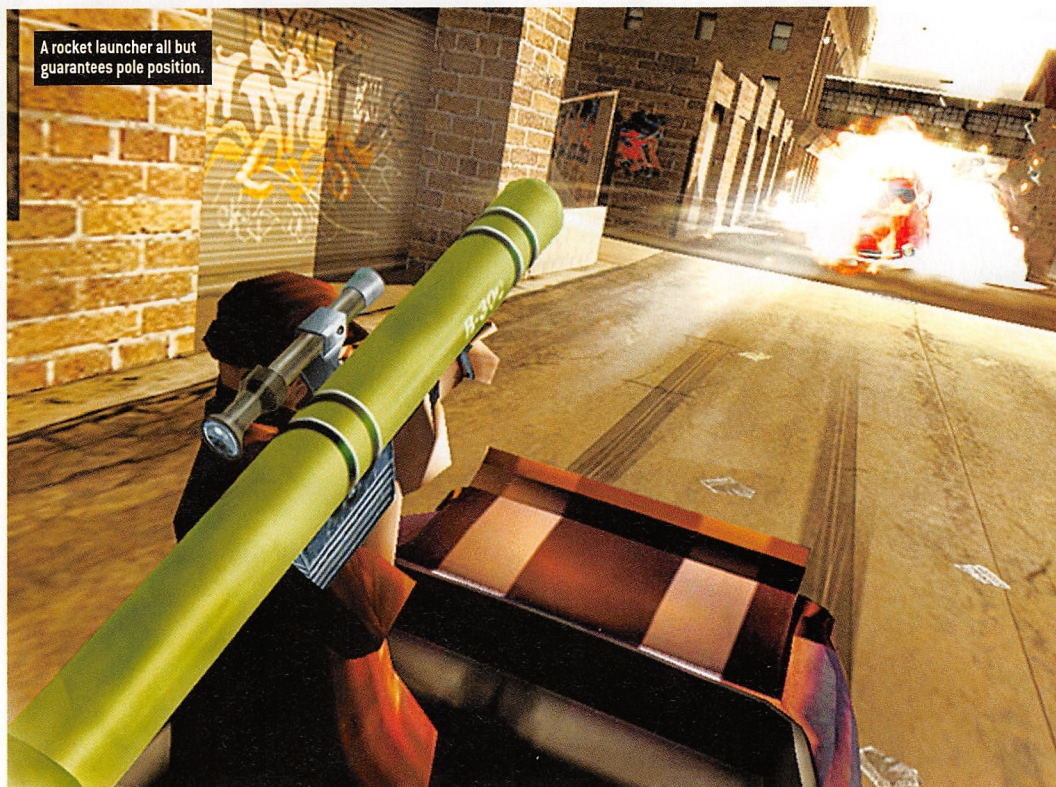
As an alternative to the Story mode you're free to roam the city searching for common criminals and extra challenges that earn you points to spend on upgrading your spider skills. A new map view picks these extras out as icons so you don't need to rely on stumbling upon them by accident. The levels themselves are much larger, closer to the size of *Vice City* than Spidey's previous Manhattan home. Life-saving tasks range from rescuing a person hanging from a skyscraper ledge to foiling robberies *Scooby Doo*-style. Mini-game challenges are far simpler and act as training lessons and, later on, skill tests. The most notable mini-game sees Spidey swing through a

series of hoops dotted throughout the city in a bid to earn points, impress the locals and get his picture in the Daily Bugle.

Combat has been overhauled to make Spidey less of a brawler than he was in the first game and more like the acrobat he should be. His most effective combo is to lift an enemy into the air, jump up with them and juggle them with punches, though he can also momentarily tie them up with a web.

Due alongside the release of the blockbuster movie this July, *Spider-Man 2* has already got our spider sense tingling. More – much more – next month.





A rocket launcher all but guarantees pole position.

THUG TRUCKIN'

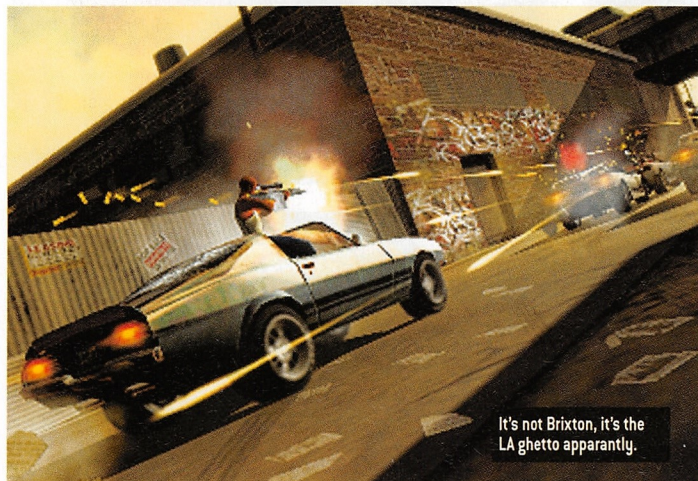
DRIVE-BY SHOOTING MAKES PS2 NOTORIOUS!

Guns, pimps, gangsters and prostitutes galore in *Notorious: Die to Drive*.

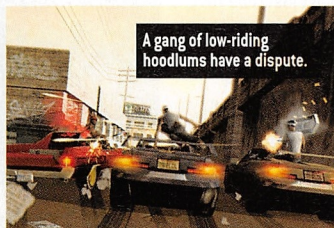
DRIVING GAMES TAKE A FURTHER STEP INTO INSANE gangsta territory this month with the announcement of *Notorious: Die to Drive*. Ripping pages from the *Need for Speed Underground* book of street culture, *Notorious* takes street racing to the ghettos of Los Angeles and added more gang-related violence than the entire *GTA* series put together. Guns, knives and Molotov cocktails can all be used mid race to pummel opponents and protect your hood or, further on in the game, your ultra bling crib on the hill. Online play means you can play as part of a gang protecting your street from rival thugs or, more realistically, a collection of online-enabled teenagers from Syndey's northern beaches.



Backed by a hip hop soundtrack and clearly cashing in on the Biggie/Tupac murders, *Notorious: Die to Drive* has all the hip hop hallmarks you'll ever need. Mixing *Twisted Metal: Black* gameplay with the ever popular urban image sounds like a winner to us, especially if it turns out to be the first decent online car battler on PS2. It faces stiff competition from other street racers like the forthcoming *Need For Speed Underground 2*, but the added gun battles are something new and if the online play really is as good as it sounds, *Notorious: Die to Drive* should bring about a resurgence of violent racers. *Destruction Derby Arenas* didn't really hit the mark for online car battling, but *Notorious: Die to Drive* looks to be bang on target.



It's not Brixton, it's the LA ghetto apparently.



A gang of low-riding hoodlums have a dispute.



INSIDER

THESE JUST IN FROM OUR FRONTLINE E3 REPORTER



ONLINE WAR

In a brave move, new war sim *Battlefield: Modern Combat* from EA will be an online only game. There are over 30 tanks, choppers and land vehicles to play with. You can even parachute into a map and blast away at the same time. *Battlefield: Modern Combat* is due in November.



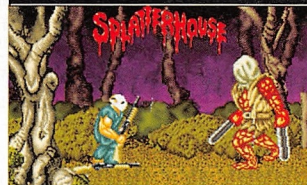
FAR, FAR AWAY

Overrated PC shooter *Far Cry* is making it's way towards PS2. *Far Cry: Instincts* is billed as a survival shooter as you assume the role of Jack Carver and are stranded on a paradise island inhabited by suspicious mercenaries. We'll have an exclusive first look next month.



JUICY EXTRAS

Online treats will make up the hefty multiplayer part of *Juiced*. There's private and open races, while breeding and modifying cars will also assist you in the online team game, where four of your cars can race alongside you and rivals. See the first *Juiced* footage here, next month.

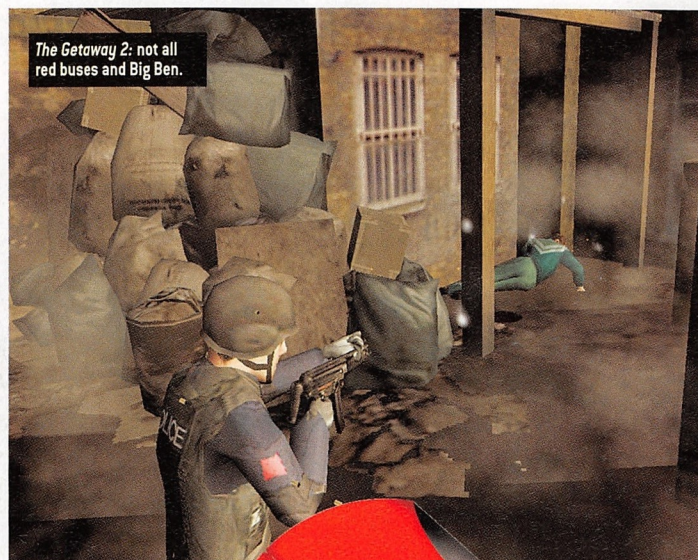
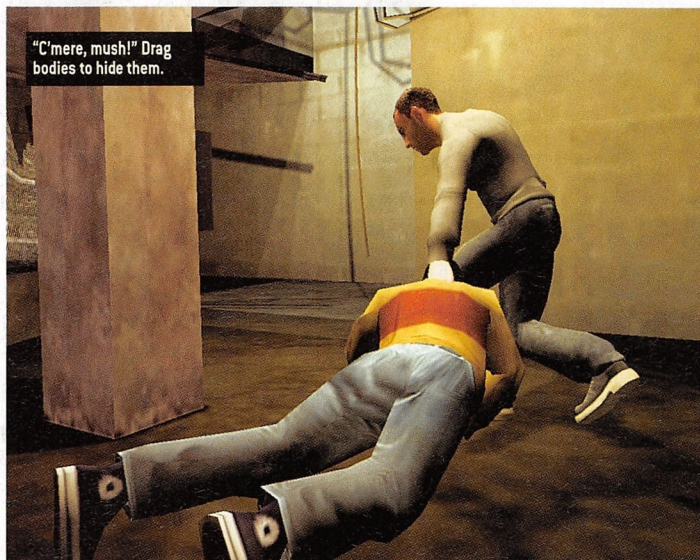


MAD HOUSE

Namco is releasing its horror classic *Splatterhouse* this November. The PS2 update will take the 2D slasher into a free-roaming environment but will still be focused on classic horror films such as *Friday 13th* and *Texas Chainsaw Massacre*.

GLOBAL EXTRA

All the latest on the biggest PlayStation2 games on your short-term radar.



FIRST AGAIN!
ALL NEW SCREENS
AND INFO!

THE GETAWAY 2

We would say that London has never looked so scummy, but that'd be a lie. Further capital entertainment from *The Getaway 2*.

> PUBLISHER SONY
> GENRE ACTION
> OUT NOVEMBER

TAKE ONE RELUCTANT MUSCLE FOR HIRE AND ONE RUTHLESS

cop and what have you got? A carbon copy of Mark Hammond and Frank Carter from *The Getaway*, or a sequel that won't fall into the same trap as the bloated original?

Sony is certainly talking a good game at any rate, with the promise of more varied driving missions that aren't just repetitive timed challenges from A to B anymore, as well as more playable characters. We've yet to see any of these new characters in action, though we reckon the fat fella from the 'Who the hell are you?' panel (right) is a playable member of a gang. Indeed, the latest rumour is that you'll be able to control one member from each of the Triads, Yardies and other mobs that terrorise London.

Back with main characters Eddie O'Connor and Mitch, these latest shots continue to show the more beat 'em up feel of Eddie's levels and Mitch's handywork with a gun. His role in a 'shoot first, ask questions later' tactical firearms unit explains why practically every pic released so far has found him prowling rooftops or edging his way through rundown buildings. There's also a nod to action stealth games, with Eddie needing to drag some bodies out of sight of nearby guards.

A lot of you bought *The Getaway* when it came out; a lot of you felt it was a bit of a kick in the teeth for gamers. After losing the sales battle to *GTA: Vice City* last time around, it'll be interesting to see how *The Getaway 2* fares against *GTA: San Andreas* when they're both released towards the end of the year.



WHO THE HELL ARE YOU?

What better way to create believable hard men than plucking ugly blokes from obscurity off the street?



EDDIE O'CONNER

An ex-amateur boxer who's more famous for his former prowess in the ring than his newly-chosen profession as a hired thug. Has a neck that would make giant redwood trees jealous.



MITCH

A ruthless, trigger-happy cop who has somehow managed to keep his job – unlike Frank from the original. The proud owner of a pair of eyes that wouldn't disgrace Count Dracula.



YURIRO

Meet the new cave troll! Looks like your average East London thug, or perhaps a darts player this one. Not that they're mutually exclusive. There's a definite *Shrek*-iness about him too.



A typical Wednesday night in sunny Redfern.



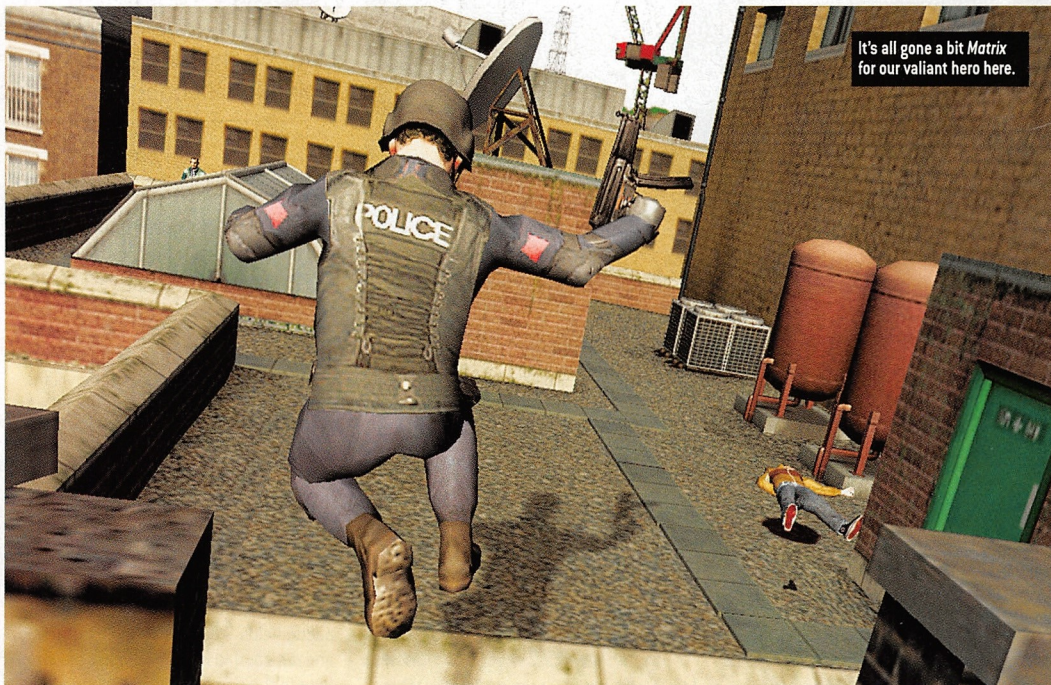
It's grey, it's made of breezeblocks – it must be London!



Your friendly neighbourhood policeman. Nice chap.



"Dahn't make me come ovah vere an' sort you aaah!"



It's all gone a bit *Matrix* for our valiant hero here.

KILLZONE

As ever, we bring you the very latest info on *Killzone*. This month we reveal exactly how the landmark game will be keeping your trigger-finger happy.

> PUBLISHER	SONY
> GENRE	SHOOTING
> OUT	NOVEMBER

IT'S NOT LONG NOW TILL THE ALMIGHTY KILLZONE is finally unveiled to the world at large. Here at PSW, of course, we've been bringing you exclusive coverage of the 'Next Big Thing In Shooters' for many months now. What we haven't told you about up until now is the full weapons roster for both your ISA grunts and the enemy Helghast forces. As the ISA you have a knife, pistol, shotgun, sub-machine gun, assault rifle, chain

gun, sniper rifle, Luger SMG, Templar assault rifle, Rico chain gun, grenade launcher, missile launcher, hand grenade and an emplaced heavy machine gun. The Helghast get even beefier weapons. They've got access to a knife, machine pistol, assault rifle, light machine gun, sniper rifle, battle pistol, squad cannon, missile launcher, designator and emplaced heavy machine gun. Plus they also get the whopppp ALAT, AA and ADATS stationary cannons that we exclusively revealed last month in PSW.

The result is all-out warfare on a scale PS2 hasn't managed previously. Roll on November, eh?



It's like a warzone in here! Honstly, you never tidy up, do you?



The iconic shooting of the memorials by the Helghast menace.



Now we know exactly what weapons will make them all dead. Helghast scum!



Even the grey corridors get us excited! Is that sad? It is, isn't it? We're sorry.



While he aims his gun, a tiny fish swims into his penis.



Setting foreigners alight is the right of every American.



A tank? In the Jungle? They haven't done this before.

SHELLSHOCK: NAM '67

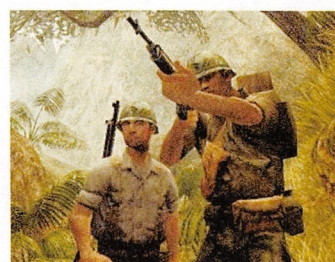
More on the war game that makes the invasion of Iraq look like a school science trip to the countryside.

> PUBLISHER	EIDOS
> GENRE	SHOOTING
> OUT	JULY

WE WEREN'T KIDDING WHEN WE TOLD you that *ShellShock: Nam '67* would be ethically questionable stuff. Killing and maiming the Vietcong hordes is dubious enough given the blurred reasons behind invading the country in the first place, but murdering potentially innocent civilians and napalming entire villages signal a definite crossing of the line. Heck, you even have to kill women! If war is hell, then it looks like the people behind *ShellShock: Nam '67* are casting you as one of its biggest, nastiest demons.

That aside, these latest screens from the game continue to impress. The locations – which range from tunnels to paddy fields – all look suitably authentic, and it's good to know you won't have to fight in the same jungle environments

over and over again. We also like the way you have to be constantly on the lookout for ambushes, expertly hidden enemies and homemade booby-traps like sharp sticks smeared with poo. It's tense and taut without lapsing into tiresome stealth action, and it sounds like the enemies will be every bit as horrible as you are. Look out for our exclusive hands-on next issue, where we'll tell you whether *ShellShock* really does live up to expectations.



No, over there. Next to that tree. Not that tree, that one.



Helicopters will drop you straight into the thick of the action. Thereafter, it's up to you to keep your squad alive.



You'll need to use all your men wisely to survive.



Some sections are all about the shooting. Fair enough!

CONFLICT: VIETNAM

Stuck behind enemy lines while low on ammo and rations, this isn't about winning a war – it's about staying alive.

> PUBLISHER	SCI
> GENRE	SHOOTING
> OUT	SEPTEMBER

HOT ON THE BLOODSTAINED HEELS OF Shellshock: *Nam '67* is this spin-off from the *Conflict: Desert Storm* series. While *Shellshock* is all about one man Vs Vietnam, this sees you taking control of four hardened GIs.

The game's trump card is the addition of destructible environments, which we're told will be a crucial part of the gameplay, rather than just disposable eye-candy. You can rip apart vehicles, destroy buildings with napalm air strikes and also shoot out lights if you want to take a more stealthy approach. But beware, because your enemies will also use all these tactics to their advantage too.

Keeping your four raw recruits alive is once again the over-arching aim of missions, and this time you're rewarded

for how you go about doing so. Performance points can be spent after each mission on developing 12 skills such as sniper, medic and leadership, though fortunately this won't mean each squad member's specialised skill is undermined. These gameplay advances mean it's looking like a much more polished title than the earlier games. *Ghost Recon 2*'s arcadey brother, maybe?



There'll be plenty of countryside to turn into rubble.

METAL GEAR SOLID 3: SNAKE EATER



New footage shows Snake communing with nature and becoming as one with the animals in a particularly hilarious way...

> PUBLISHER	KONAMI
> GENRE	ACTION
> OUT	NOVEMBER

CHECK OUT THIS MONTH'S DVD FOR 11 MINUTES of exclusive gameplay footage showing how the camouflage and face paint system works.

You'll see how Snake evades capture with camo using traditional leaf and tree bark outfits, a red and black fire uniform, a snow colour, an olive drab costume, a tiger stripe pattern and good old plain black. In addition to his costumes you'll also learn

how Snake uses black and woodland-themed face paints to increase his chances of avoiding detection.

Besides his camouflage percentage rating, the exclusive new footage shows how a green or red exclamation mark above an alerted enemy's head means they've seen or heard something suspicious. Change your camouflage to the appropriate colour and the exclamation mark becomes a question mark, before quickly disappearing altogether.

The footage ends with a *James Bond*-style moment of ingenuity, as Snake manages to scare away an enemy by wearing... an alligator head!



Shooting guards is sooo 1990s. Pistol whipping is where it's at now!



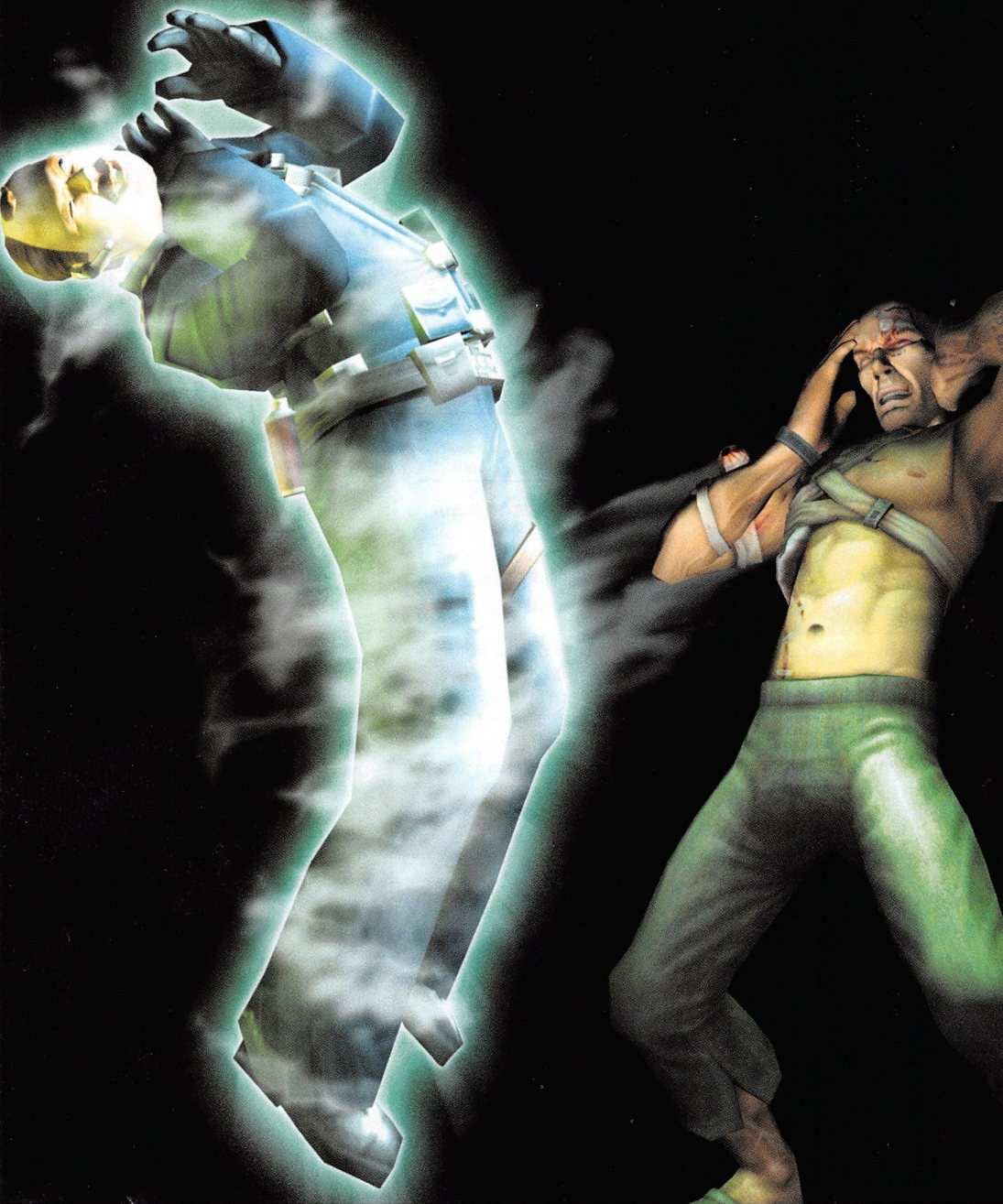
Now Snake can fight with a gun and knife in his hands.



It was the last time he'd ask Snake to demonstrate the hokey pokey to him.



We want to be able to tap their other shoulder, so they'll look the wrong way. Hee...



"AN EXPLOSIVE ACTION SHOOTER IN THE SAME VEIN AS MAX PAYNE."

SECOND SIGHT

Don't ask how we know, but somehow we think *Second Sight* is going to wow everyone. Maybe we're psychic or something.

> GENRE	ACTION
> DEVELOPER	FREE RADICAL DESIGN
> PUBLISHER	CODEMASTERS
> OUT	NOVEMBER
> ONLINE	NO

THE STORY GOES A BIT LIKE THIS: MAN WAKES

up in lab, man has no memory, man finds he's been experimented on. Reader stops reading, convinced he's seen this kind of crap a million times before. Reader's wrong. Because this is the beginning of *Second Sight*, the new action adventure from Free Radical Design. They're the same fellas responsible for the *TimeSplitters* series and the same team who started their career creating the legendary *Goldeneye* on Nintendo 64. We like them. A lot. Not because they're extraordinarily generous with their cash or because they have fit sisters. We like them because they come up with extraordinary games. And with *Second Sight*, they've decided to move away from the straight shooter to create an action title that gifts you with psychic powers. Don't worry though – you'll still get some big guns to play with too.

Like we say, you begin the game as a nameless man who wakes up in a laboratory, only to find he's been bestowed with immense psychic powers. It transpires that the man in question is called John Vattic, and he's the last known survivor of a dangerous trip to infiltrate a Siberian base where insane psychic experiments were known to be taking place. Now John can move objects with the power of his brain, send his aura out to do a bit of exploring, or level groups of enemies with a psychic blast. All of which is small compensation for looking a bit like an anorexic version of northern TV fashionista, Wayne Hemingway.

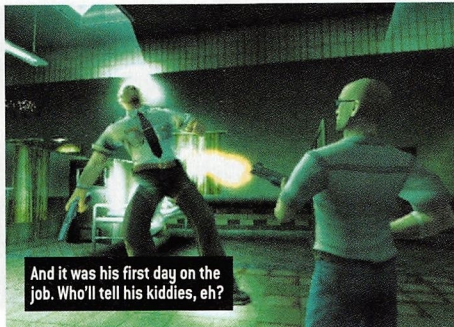
ALL IN THE MIND

As the story moves through some striking research labs and cobwebbed asylums, Vattic begins to remember more of his fateful mission in playable flashback scenes. He starts out as a rather comically self-important geek, a professor who rebukes claims of psychic activity with unusual aplomb. When he's ordered to go and explore a remote Siberian research lab with a gung-ho team of marines, he finds out that his scepticism's embarrassingly misplaced. Psychic powers *do* exist, and for some mysterious reason he's been gifted with the lion's share. In a clever twist your actions during the playable flashbacks (which take up a big chunk of gameplay) will actually influence events in the 'present.' Make a bad choice and you could find yourself hindered in your escape from the evil authorities. Perform well in the Siberian mission and there might just be more allies around in your time of need.

Oddly enough, we were as impressed by the voice acting and animation as we were by the action. Well, nearly. We're not quite as sad as all that. Let's just say that we loved the over-the-top, cartoonish style that Free Radical invented for *TimeSplitters*. It's carried over well into *Second Sight*, but with a slightly furrowed brow and sensible shoes on. Just because it's ever-so-slightly more serious doesn't mean it's going to be straight-faced, though. The heightened, almost caricature style of Vattic and his assailants means there's much more scope for conveying emotion. Narrowed eyes, bared teeth, sardonic glances, it's all here. Alright, so it's not as expressive as Andy Serkis' Gollum in the *Lord of the Rings*, but it's a damn sight better than what we're used to. All the cut-scenes are created using the in-game graphics, so what you see in the more talky bits is accurately in gameplay too.



Raise 'em up, shoot 'em down – that's Vattic's trademark style.

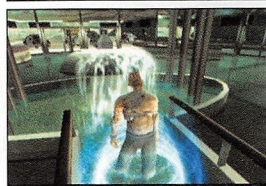


And it was his first day on the job. Who'll tell his kiddies, eh?



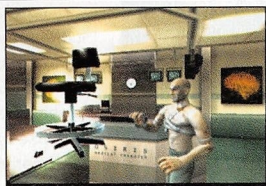
"That's the last time this muppet calls me Ghandi!"

I'VE GOT THE POWER! Mr Vattic's mental toolbox opened and examined.



HEALING

Yawn yawn yawn. Who cares about healing anyway? Alright, it may not be the most exciting power, but it's damn useful when you're about to kick it. There are no health packs, so you'll need it.



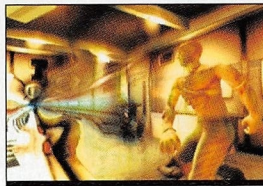
TELEKINESIS

The core power of the game, telekinesis involves moving objects, and later people, around with the mind. Also includes the ability to spell 'telekinesis'. That's an art in itself, we can tell you.



PROJECTION

Vattic can swallow DVDs and 'project' the film onto a white wall or screen through his belly button. Well, either that or he can send his psychic self out like a ghost to patrol the area. We're not sure.



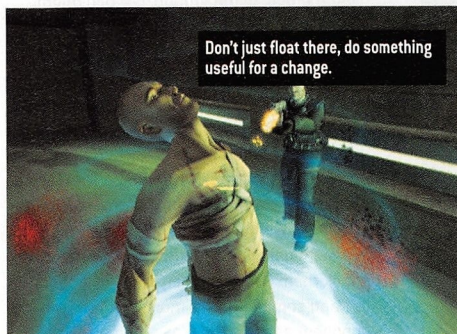
PSI BLAST

When the bullets have run out, when the fists are bleeding, when it's just too darn cool not to do it, you can summon up a burst of psychic power that knocks down nearby enemies, or even kills them.



CHARM

It's not invisibility, right? It's the ability to cloud people's minds so you can walk past them unaware. The difference being you're vulnerable to cameras and also the uncharmed.



Don't just float there, do something useful for a change.



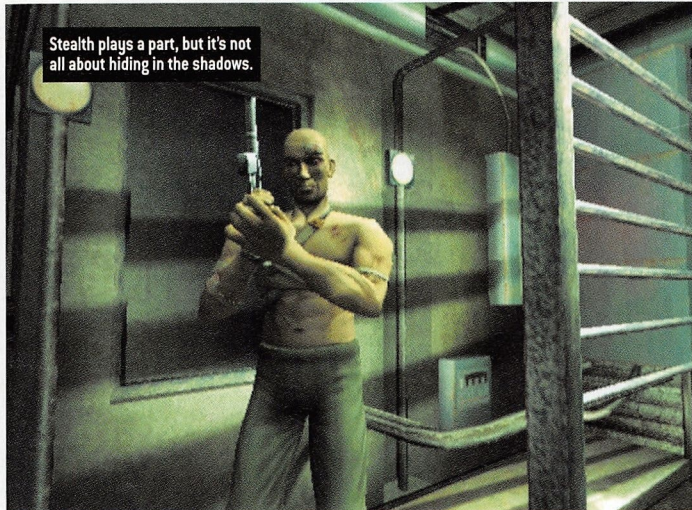
Take enemies hostage to get the tactical advantage.



Who was it who said blue was official psi-power colour anyway?



Only a half mad psychic would get in a gunfight like this.



Stealth plays a part, but it's not all about hiding in the shadows.



SECOND SIGHT FACT!

> SOUL MAN

John Vattic's name may be a play on words: 'Vatic' means prophetic. Can he see the future too?

> BIG BANG

If you tire of your psychic powers, there are 13 weapons available in the game to shoot folks with instead.

> THAT THING

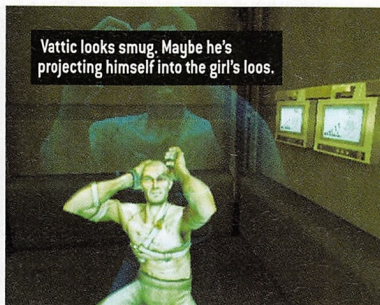
Recognise the 'Siberia research facility' aspect of the game? It's very reminiscent of 2002's *The Thing* game.

> IT'S A MADHOUSE

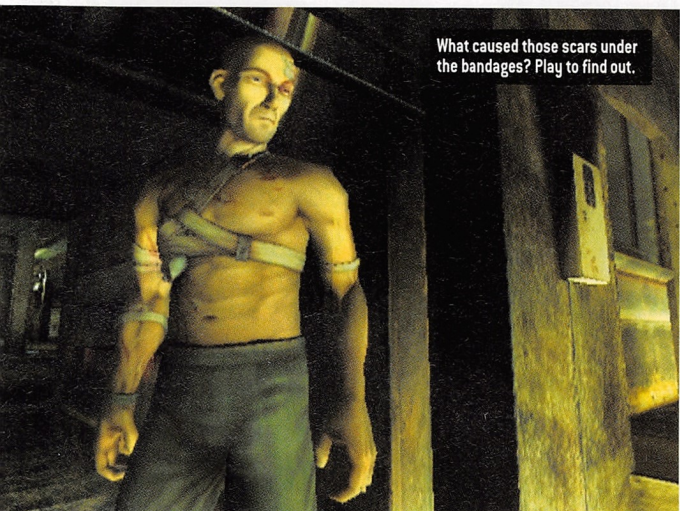
Vattic ventures into an asylum to rescue another team member, a female psychic. Hmm...



This heavyweight major guides you through the Siberian base.



Vattic looks smug. Maybe he's projecting himself into the girl's loos.



What caused those scars under the bandages? Play to find out.



"Becks has got a fantastic look" Wayne Hemingway, everybody!



"We're just good friends, honest. What are you, her dad?"



Heal in the middle of guards to make sure you survive.

WHAT THE MAKERS SAY

"COMBINING AN IMMERSIVE THRILLER STORYLINE WITH PARANORMAL PSYCHIC ABILITIES, STEALTHY EXPLORATION AND INTENSE SHOOTER ACTION, SECOND SIGHT REDEFINES THE STANDARDS FOR ACTION ADVENTURE NARRATIVE AND GAMEPLAY."

The detail on environments is just as accurate, with nicely vibrant colours giving even the dingiest dungeon a larger than life makeover.

I PSI WITH MY LITTLE EYE

Naturally, all this Uri Geller malarkey lends itself well to some bizarre situations, as you try to use Vattic's powers to make mayhem rather than advance the plot. Our favourite part was during a break-in to rescue a colleague from a sinister asylum. Having broken in and incapacitated some guards, you're faced with a handful of doctors attending to the groaning madmen, some of whom are tied to their beds. You need to get to the other side without setting off the alarm, which appears to be easy enough. But, of course, you'd be a joyless fool if you didn't stop and try some fun stuff first. We killed all the doctors with psychic blasts, and then killed all the patients too. Then we levitated one of their dead bodies, smashing it into the windows, breaking the glass. Then we used the floating corpse to knock out the guards who were flooding in. Then we smashed the corpse against the wall a bit more. Ah, happy memories indeed.

Second Sight's as much about shooting as it is about psyching. Once you've remembered enough mojo to pick up humans, there's nothing stopping you getting your rifle out and peppering them with bullets. You'll only have a limited amount of psychic energy, but at least it continually recharges. You may not be able to waltz into a room full of guards and blast them all to the ground, but you might just have enough energy to send in your astral projection to spy out their weak spots, then perhaps float a crate (!) to distract them long enough while you shoot them all in cold-blood, in the back.

For a man who's just stumbled off of a hospital bed, Vattic's pretty handy with his fists too. He can take out most enemy guards with a few well-timed jabs, and he's not averse to using a hilarious swinging kick to knock them out when they're down. In hand-to-hand combat, you're more likely to grab the opponent and use them as a human shield than to simply punch their lights out. All this means that most situations have several outcomes. You can use stealth, violence or magic mind power to get through to the other side. Which one you use is up to you.

At least, that's the idea. We're wary of phrases like "open-ended problem solving" and "game-altering decisions" because we've been let down so many times in the past. So let's concentrate on the more concrete aspects of *Second Sight*. One, it looks the business. Two, it plays great. Three, floating corpses. It's the holy trilogy of games design, we tell you. And if you don't believe us, well, Free Radical is also working on *TimeSplitters 3*. So that's okay, then.

FIRST OPINIONS

Oddly enough, there's more than a hint of *Metal Gear Solid* about *Second Sight*. We don't know whether it's the camera angles, the subtle yet amazing attention to detail, or the emphasis on a rollercoaster plot. But we're happy to report that it's also a stunning looking game in its own right. We'll keep our third eye trained on *Second Sight* and give you all the details – before they happen. Aha!

/ JOFF BROWN

MIND GAMES

Psi-Ops is out soon, and it's eerily similar to *Second Sight*. Here's how.



SECOND SIGHT



PSI-OPS

WHAT'S THE STORY?

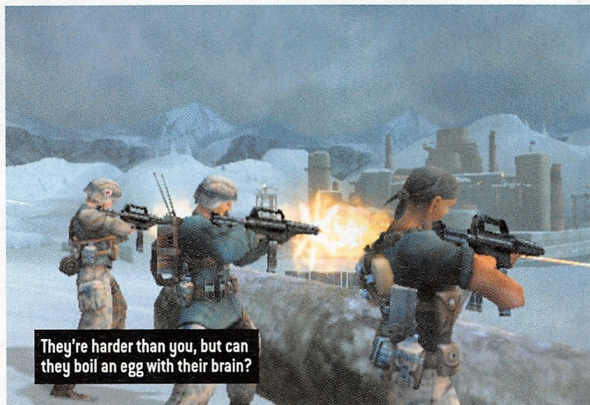
Both games are in the action adventure mould, star a 'troubled' character with a range of special abilities and have you using a combination of these psi-abilities and good old-fashioned machine gun fire to destroy enemies with.

LEADING MEN?

You'll play as an amnesiac waking up with no knowledge of who you are, and no remembrance of your recent military expedition or your gradually returning psychic powers. In both games. Go figure...

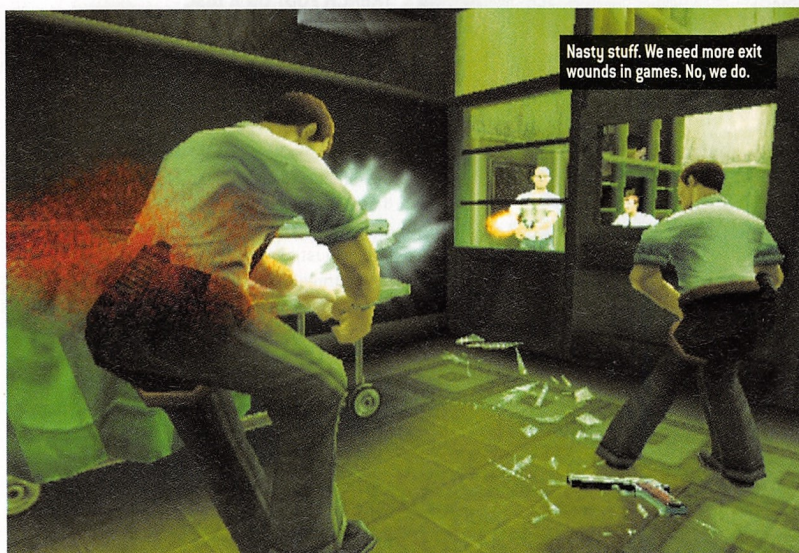
SO THE DIFFERENCE IS?

Okay, so *Psi-Ops* has pyrokinesis (setting fire to things), and crucially you can surf on objects that you raise up. But it can't match *Second Sight* in terms of graphical slickness or rival its engrossing story.



They're harder than you, but can they boil an egg with their brain?

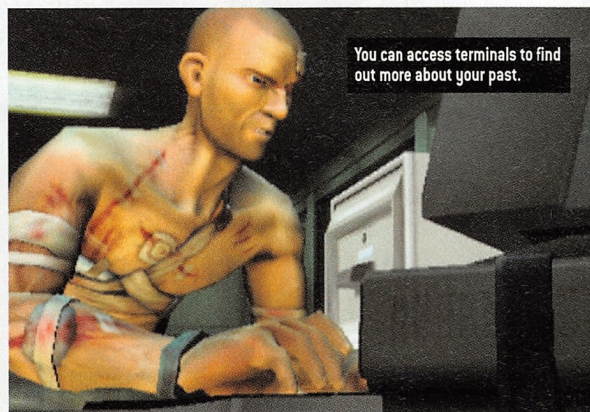
"JOHN CAN MOVE OBJECTS WITH THE POWER OF HIS BRAIN."



Nasty stuff. We need more exit wounds in games. No, we do.



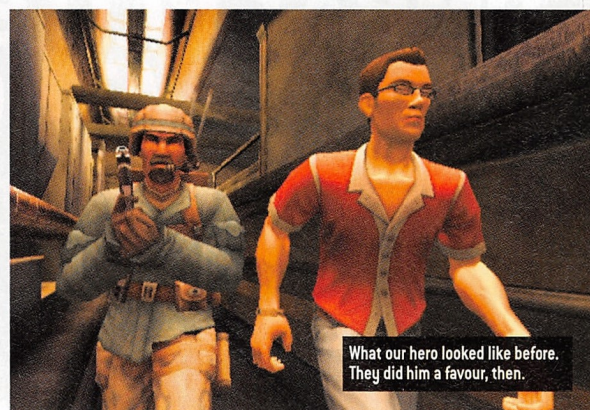
Some people just can't stand anyone who's different. Fascists!



You can access terminals to find out more about your past.



John's a newbie at this stage, but you'll still get fat weapons.



What our hero looked like before. They did him a favour, then.



> MOUSTACHIO MAN

Facial hair: a must-have requirement for anyone wishing to join Her Majesty's forces.

“ONE FALSE MOVE COULD SEE YOU TORN TO PIECES IN A HAIL OF BULLETS.”

COMBAT ELITE: WWII PARATROOPERS

Ken Dodd's Diddymen meet *The Bridge On The River Kwai* in this uncompromising World War II strategic adventure.

> GENRE	ADVENTURE
> DEVELOPER	BATTLE BORNE ENTERTAINMENT
> PUBLISHER	ACCLAIM
> OUT	JUNE
> ONLINE	NO

FRANCE, JUNE 6TH, 1944. IT'S THE DAY OF the D-Day landings as the Allies take their first tentative steps towards reclaiming mainland Europe. Thousands would die over the coming weeks as the Allied forces began the decisive push through France. The bulk of the Allied force landed in Normandy, assisted by some 17,000 US and British paratroopers who were dropped behind enemy lines in occupied France. It's as one of these paratroopers that you begin your journey in the *Combat Elite* universe.

As such, the scenario is typical World War II fare; you the heroic paratrooper putting an end to considerable slices of the German army like some kind of powerful Nazi pesticide. Since the game's development team comprises several ex-members of the *Fallout 2*, *Baldur's Gate* and *Ghost Recon* teams anyone who's familiar with these titles should be able to spot their influence. The game uses the *Baldur's Gate* engine seen in recent titles *Fallout: Brotherhood of Steel* and *Champions of Norrath*, but here it's freed from its traditional fantasy trappings and firmly slotted into the realism box of the mid-twentieth century. That realism is backed up by the military knowledge of the *Ghost Recon* team, making for an unusual but intelligent blend.

TRENCH FOOT ON A DISC

Historical accuracy and attention to detail are the priorities here and a feeling of seriousness pervades the game. The movie clips feature footage and samples from period newsreels, all of which set the scene admirably. The sense of gravitas runs through into the game itself with the difficulty level set suitably high. Take more than a few bullets and you'll soon find your man slumped in a corner of a foreign field that is forever Australia. Well, America. *ahem*

The three characters available for your wargaming pleasure include two Americans and an English Indian type, each with their chosen specialisations. The Indian is the close quarters man, trained in the use of pistols and fists. Of the two Americans, one is the all-rounder and the other a heavy weapons specialist.

The role-playing trappings of the *Baldur's Gate* series also poke their head into proceedings here, with your characters gaining skill points as they progress through the game to spend on upgraded skills. This allows for a far more customisable experience, giving you the chance to further refine your characters' specialisations until you have built your ideal fighting man.

It's hard though, bloody hard. In fact, at times *Combat Elite* is a complete bastard. You always feel fragile and thoroughly human. One false move could well see you torn to pieces in a hail of bullets. This is not a game aiming to make friends with anyone. The trade-off for the often crushing frustration of constantly dying is a palpable sense of danger. The sure and certain knowledge that you could get shot to pieces in a split second forces you to take things slowly and plan your attacks carefully. When faced with more than one enemy, any attempt to charge in firing will almost certainly result in a premature end to the war for your plucky little soldier.

And little is the word. The zoomed-out, top-down perspective gives you a mostly useful view of your surroundings and allows for a reasonable amount of tactical thought and planning. The lack of a zoom function is a bit problematic, though.



BAND OF BROTHERS

Meet the three heroes of *Combat Elite*.



Name: Private Patrick Parker
Born: Texas
Nationality: American
Specialisation: Rifle



Name: Private John Howe
Born: Georgia
Nationality: American
Specialisation: Heavy MG



Name: Private Stephen Frost
Born: Poona, India
Nationality: English
Specialisation: Hand-to-hand



COMBAT ELITE FACT!

> HISTORY LESSON

Combat Elite recreates the toughest battles of WWII, including D-Day and Operation Market Garden.

> GLOBE TROTTER

The game will feature battles in war-torn cities throughout France, Holland and Belgium.

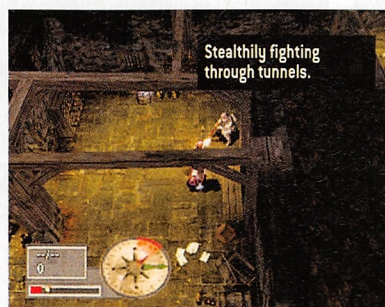
> THAT'S NOT A KNIFE

Some missions in the latter half of the game involve preventing the use of nuclear weapons in mainland Europe.

> STARS AND STRIPES

Instead of traditional experience levels, players will rise through the military ranks as they play the game.





Enemies shoot from off the screen and when as few as three shots see your man reduced from full health to death, this means that some trial and error deaths are usually required. As each level has to be completed without dying, being forced back to the beginning because of a sudden and unpredictable ambush is hugely frustrating.

There are some 40 levels to overcome, ranging from bombastic tank battles to glacial stealth missions. Adding considerable depth to proceedings, each mission feels quite, quite different to the last. Then there's the two-player mode; with such a low chance of survival, you're going to want all the help you can get. Joining up with a mate really lets the game shine, because with two soldiers instead of one more complex strategies can be executed – essential if you both want to survive some of the trickier situations.

ALL'S FAIR IN LOVE AND WAR?

Aside from the intense difficulty, we have some other gripes with *Combat Elite*. Auto aiming is a highly hit and miss affair. When you're so vulnerable, having to rely on the computer to do your aiming can be a touch galling. When it's so hit and miss – and in the earlier stages it's mostly miss – this leads to needless frustration. Also, some horribly intrusive invisible walls create no-go areas within the game world. Like when you plan to run behind a lamppost and down an alley to get away from the deadly tank fire, only to discover that you can't get behind the lamppost or down the alleyway is extremely annoying. The level design needs to be more functional for the deep tactical nature of the game to really come to the fore. It's another needless frustration in an already demanding and unforgiving title. Then there's the absence of a map. Perhaps it's a further nod to ruthless realism, but the lack of map means that you have to learn your way around the levels while wearing a blindfold. There's no radar either, so the only way of keeping track of your squad members and allies is by keeping close to them. If they disappear from the screen you stand little chance of finding them again. If they are vital to the success of your mission, then you're most probably screwed. Still, as you may have gathered, this is a hard-assed game quite willing to spit in your eye if you as much as look at it a bit funny, let alone spill its schooner, so these ruthless demands are to be expected.

This is shaping up to be an intensely hardcore experience, but one with the potential to offer an intelligent and mature take on the wargame genre. It needs a certain degree of taming if it's to have widespread appeal, but as it stands, it looks likely to offer a varied and meaty challenge to those interested in a realistic and fearsome tactical shooter. With little people.

FIRST OPINION

Combat Elite should offer something new to WWII junkies come its release in June. The insane difficulty level coupled with an eye for historical accuracy and discrete mission structure all mark this out as something quite different to your usual war game. *Medal of Honor* this ain't. The only question is whether we have the patience to persevere. Check back next month.

/ MARK SORRELL

WHAT THE MAKERS SAY

"WITH MORE THAN TWO YEARS IN DEVELOPMENT AND THE SOLID FOUNDATION OF ITS UNDERLYING TECHNOLOGY, COMBAT ELITE WILL PUT GAMERS ON THE FRONT LINES OF THE MOST WELL KNOWN BATTLEFIELDS OF WWII."

EURO TRASH

Combat Elite will see you blowing holes all over Europe.



TOWN RALLY POINT

Mission: Rescue a captured pilot from an occupied French town before the Gestapo.
Enemies: 19
Survival Odds: 6/1



GRAVE BRIDGE

Mission: Wrest a heavily-guarded bridge from German control by foot with artillery back-up.
Enemies: 75
Survival Odds: 13/1



TANKS IN THE OPEN

Mission: Fight off German armour with Piat anti-tank rockets and anti-tank cannons.
Enemies: 13
Survival Odds: 21/1



Tanks are fearsome and terrible enemies.

“HISTORICAL ACCURACY AND ATTENTION TO DETAIL ARE THE PRIORITIES HERE.”



Even Rambo never had it this difficult.



Once again, our hero bites the dust.



Even defunct tanks must be protected.



Destroyed buildings cannot be entered.



Gun battles are short and very violent.



Some missions take speed not stealth.





> COMING IN TO LAND

If it doesn't straighten up before landing this Subaru Impreza is going to wrap itself round a tree.



“REQUIRES EVERY SHRED OF CONCENTRATION TO STAY ON THE ROAD.”

RICHARD BURNS RALLY

So realistic you can almost feel the mud spattering your undercarriage. That's not a euphemism. We just mean it's a lot like real rallying.

> GENRE	DRIVING
> DEVELOPER	SCI
> PUBLISHER	SCI
> OUT	JUNE
> ONLINE	NO

COLIN MCRAE MAKES MORE MONEY FROM HIS

games than he does from driving his car. Probably. We haven't actually bothered to check. Tony Hawk has certainly made more money from his skateboard games than he has from skateboarding. That we have bothered to check. And Richard Burns must've had his nose pressed up against the window of the swanky restaurant Colin and Tony dine in as they toast their gaming fortunes by swigging Cristal champagne from gold chalices, because he's about to release an endorsed video game of his own: *Richard Burns Rally*. As always, PSW has bagged the first play.

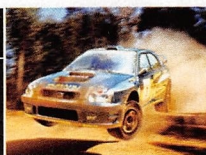
The hype suggests that it'll be the most realistic rally game on the shelves – with the most realistic handling, the most realistic structure, the most realistic stages, the most realistic sound and the most realistic visuals. So real, in fact, that when you finish your game, it's easy to get confused and try to open the door and get out of the car. That's the plan. We'll get straight to the point: they've succeeded.

Let's start by having a look under the hood. The reason for the frightening levels of realism in the game is the obsessively realistic car model. When you play *Richard Burns Rally*, your PlayStation2 will have a little electronic rally car living inside it, recreated to the tiniest, most bizarrely minute detail. The wheels, the tyres, the type of rubber the tyres are made of, the engine, the radiator, the turbo, the suspension and everything else – it's all being simulated inside your console. The reason for this absurd attention to seemingly minor details is to get you as close to the inside of a real rally car as possible without actually sitting on Richard Burns' lap, trying to keep your legs out of the way of the gear stick.

FUEL INJECTION COMES AS STANDARD

If you're the sort of person who finds words like 'slip differential' and 'suspension geometry' sexually arousing then you'll be only too happy to know that you have full fiddling rights over such matters. Every tiny detail of the insanely detailed car set-up can be tweaked and tuned to your exact desires, but you'll probably require an engineering degree to make any sense of the pages of strange words and numbers the tuning screens consist of. *Richard Burns Rally* takes the whole pre-race tuning thing very seriously and the intense physics engine enables you to tinker with your car set-up as you see fit.

There's good reason for all of this ruthless realism in relation to the car's physics. Quite simply it's because with real physics you get the behaviour of a real car. For example, the car has a radiator – if you damage it, the physics engine will work out how long it takes to run out of water and bring your car to a stop. Two wheels are on the grass, the other two on the tarmac? The physics engine works out the slippage under braking and the car will spin, just like it would in real life. You come over a jump and land one wheel before the others? The physics engine makes the car spin, just like it would in real life. Basically, thanks to the turbo-charged physics engine and in-depth car modelling, if a real rally car does it, then the game does it too. We can almost hear the sound of a million rally freaks simultaneously wetting their pants in anticipation...



RICHARD BURNS RALLY FACT!

> RICHARD BURNING HOT

The real Richard Burns won the World Rally Championship in 2001 after clinching the title on his home turf.

> THE GARAGE

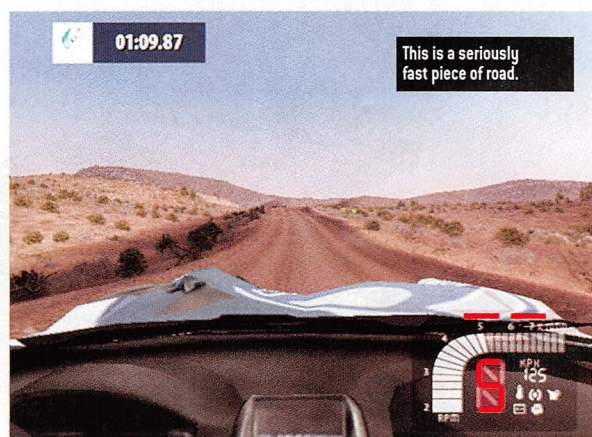
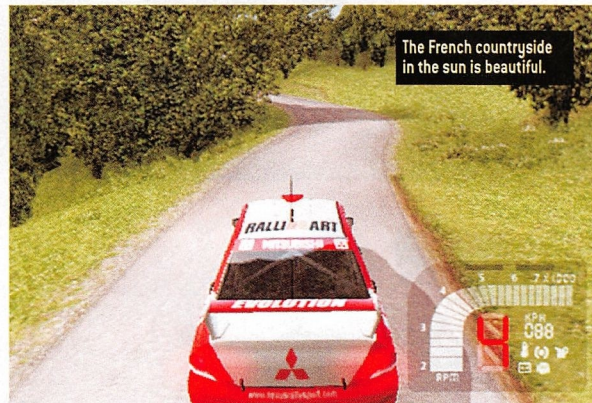
There are eight fully-licensed Group A rally cars in the game including models from MG and Hyundai.

> TURNING JAPANESE

The fictitious Japanese rally in the game is rumoured to be making its debut in the real-life WRC soon.

> SOMEBODY HELP ME

If you call for help returning your car to the road and there's nobody about, nobody will come. That's realism.



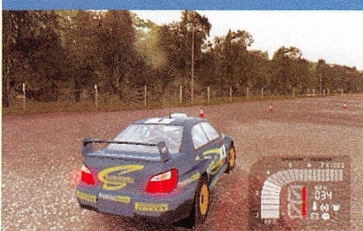
SCHOOL'S OUT

Before you get to drive you have to earn your licence!



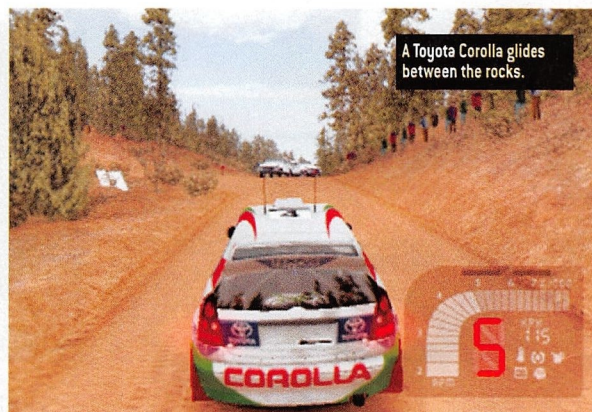
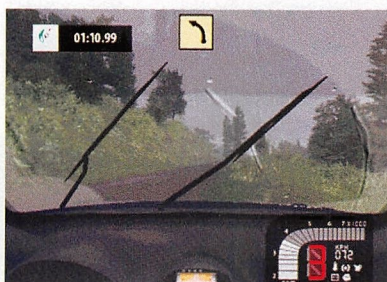
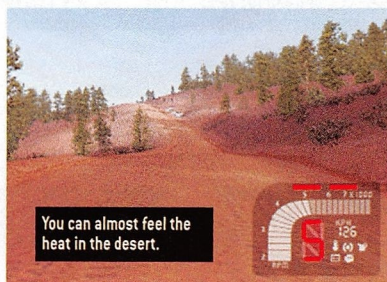
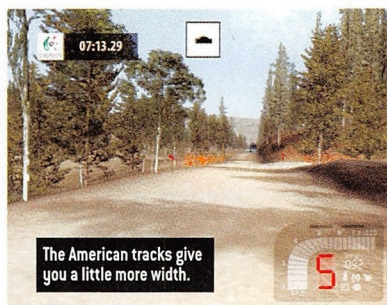
BEGINNER

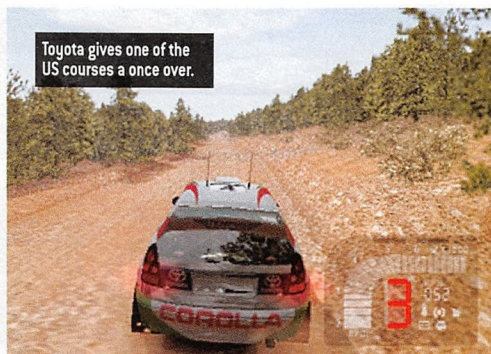
Set across six challenges, this teaches you the fundamentals of rally driving. It includes braking, gear choice and correct road positioning, before challenging you to complete the Rally School stage in a fairly tight time limit. Also has an in-car recording of Richard Burns himself taking on the stage.



ADVANCED

A further eleven challenges await you here, teaching you such techniques as power-sliding, handbrake turns, drifting and a little on suspension set-up. Considerably harder than the earlier challenges, this ends with you having to complete the Rally School stage within a very strict time limit.





WHAT THE MAKERS SAY

"THIS IS A VERY EXCITING COLLABORATION WITH RICHARD. WE BELIEVE THAT THE RICHARD BURNS RALLY SERIES OF GAMES HAS THE POTENTIAL TO TAKE POLE POSITION IN THE HIGHLY POPULAR RALLY MARKET."

It's not just the physics upping the realism stakes to unprecedented levels, the graphics are just as disconcertingly real. No shiny everything and stunning sunsets here. No precarious mountain tracks winding round immense lakes complete with little boats. Just lots of expensive cars going really fast on dirt roads - everything you need and nothing you don't.

That said, the game *does* look great, from the cars to the scenery. Every sparse tree and clump of miserable grass, every overcast sky and distant hill is as real as you could want. It doesn't make for a great spectacle but it's both convincing and in its own way quite desolately beautiful. Also, the devil is in the details once again. If you see or hear a television helicopter flying overhead, when you come to watch the replay, you'll see the helicopter camera view at exactly the same time. It's almost scarily obsessive accuracy.

The in-game sound effects also strictly adhere to the realism policy. The cars spit and snarl and growl and sigh, just like the real thing. The sound of a 300bhp four-wheel drive rally monster tearing up a dusty track is all but guaranteed to set the hairs on the back of your neck on end - it's a guttural roar that vibrates through your bowels. The pace notes are similarly accurate and fully customisable, with the option to see the cornering instructions laid onto the track as icons. We also liked the grunts and groans from the occupants when you smash the car into a tree. We heard this sound a lot.

MUDFLAPS OPTIONAL

The structure of the game is similarly realistic. You start at rally school, graduate from that and choose a team to join. Then you're thrown into a full Rally season, set across 35 tracks in six countries. At the end of each stage you have twenty minutes to fix the damage you've done to your car. In our experience this will probably involve throwing the old car out and buying a whole new one. It's the closest you're going to get to being a real rally driver without stealing a Ford Focus and driving it into some trees.

There's no doubt that this is the most realistic rally game we've ever played. In fact, we'd even go so far as to say it's the most realistic game of any description we've played. This is an impressive feat, no doubt, but it's the sense of speed and the pure fear that make the game so enjoyable. When you really press hard on the accelerator, the already desperately thin track becomes thinner still and the trees whip past at truly terrifying speeds. It's not about how fast the car can go, it's about how fast you dare to drive it. You'll find actual progression extremely difficult but when you drive that car, you'll know that it's absolutely, utterly as real as can be. The feeling of joy you get from knowing you have essentially driven a real rally car successfully is pure satisfaction and this is precisely why *Richard Burns* is such an appealing game to play. Full review soon.

FIRST OPINION

This is a staggering technical achievement that's set to re-ignite the rally genre. It's utterly unforgiving and it'll prove nigh on impossible to progress in the game without serious practice, but the end experience is as thrilling as it is terrifying and rewarding.

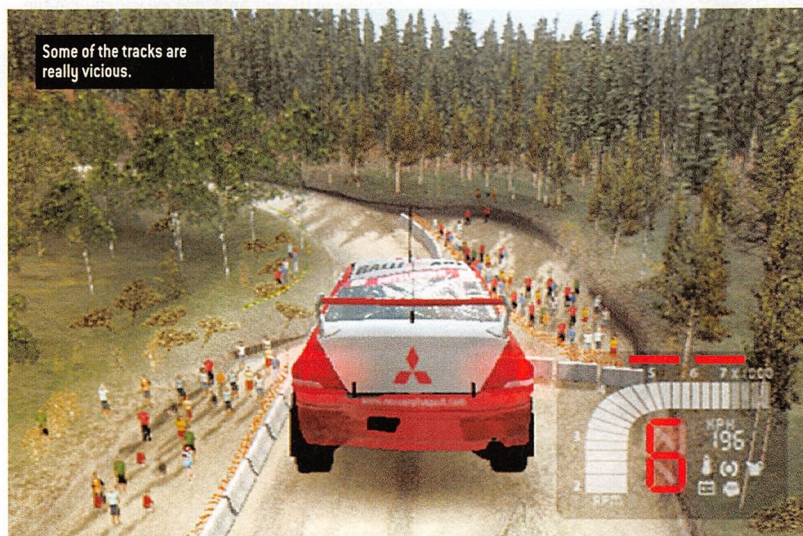
/ MARK SORRELL



The drivers-eye view is notoriously tricky.



At times, the game is utterly beautiful.



Some of the tracks are really vicious.



There is a bleak graphical realism to things.



The tarmac invites you to drive as fast as you can.



Most of the tracks are terrifyingly narrow.



Snow makes the road hard to see properly.



You need to listen closely to the pacenotes.

“IT’S THE MOST REALISTIC RALLY GAME WE’VE PLAYED.”

TOURING CARS

Around the world in six rallies – a global journal by PSW.



GREAT BRITAIN

Overcast, grey and desolate – these tracks see you winding your way across barren moors and through forests before crashing, inevitably, into a tree.



USA

Hot and dusty, these wide, fast roads have you sweating into your controller as you reach insane speeds before crashing into a tree once more.



FRANCE

Lush green hills and winding mountain roads, this tarmac-heavy race allows for some terrifying speeds down tiny winding tracks, before you crash into a tree. Again.



NORWAY

Ice and snow everywhere in this Nordic rally. Learning to control the car on these slippery surfaces is extremely hard – unlike crashing into a tree, which comes naturally.



JAPAN

Gravel and twisting mountain tracks typify this oriental rally, which is both beautiful and deadly in equal measure. Much like crashing into a tree then.



AUSTRALIA

Hot dusty roads again, but far tighter than you'd presumed possible, this is immensely demanding stuff. Expect to crash into a tree at least once during the race.



> BRAVO TWO ZERO

Join the army, travel the world meet interesting people, and then drop 2000lb bombs on them.



“THE GENERAL INTENTION IS TO MAKE THE GAME LESS, WELL, STUFFY.”

GHOST RECON 2

Bring down helicopters, destroy buildings and call in air strikes – Clancy’s boys are back with a brand new look.

> GENRE	SHOOTING
> DEVELOPER	UBI SOFT
> PUBLISHER	UBI SOFT
> OUT	NOVEMBER
> ONLINE	YES

AFTER SELLING OVER FIVE MILLION COPIES

worldwide, the sequel to *Ghost Recon* would be perfectly entitled to follow the old ‘if it isn’t broke’ adage and keep things as they are. But it’s not going to. Being a Tom Clancy game it’s safe to assume the sequel will retain a high level of realism of the one shot, one kill variety. But the general intention is to make the game less, well, stuffy. Whereas before you had to carefully edge your squads through each map inch by inch, now you’ll be shooting down helicopters, destroying buildings, and calling in infantry and air strikes. You won’t so much sneaking into heavily-guarded military bases anymore as forcing your way in.

Not that you’re about to become Arnie in *Commando* with a rocket launcher strapped over one shoulder and a mini-gun taped to the other. Don’t expect health or ammo packs to suddenly appear either. The battlefields of *Ghost Recon 2* won’t suit one-man-armies; you need to use the unique abilities of each soldier effectively and coordinate your squads properly so that Bravo team provides back-up for Alpha team and vice-versa. This is to be made easier by a new command interface that removes the thumb-twiddling histrionics of the original. In its place is a streamlined system that calls to mind the more arcade-like *Freedom Fighters* and *Conflict: Desert Storm* games.

CREATE HAVOK

The new fangled chopper takedowns and destructible buildings are all made possible thanks to a new physics engine called Havok 2 that’s also being used in *Psi-Ops: The Mindgate Conspiracy*. It also implements improved rag doll body physics so the Ghosts can blow enemies into the air or watch them flop about when they take a bullet. With such capabilities, the only disappointment is that you can’t pilot ground or air vehicles, though we take the point that elite green berets wouldn’t be driving loud, rumbling tanks when their whole purpose is to be ‘silent’.

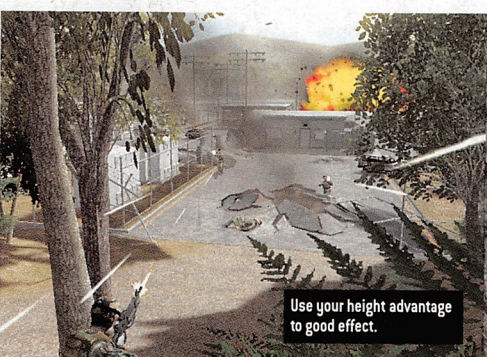
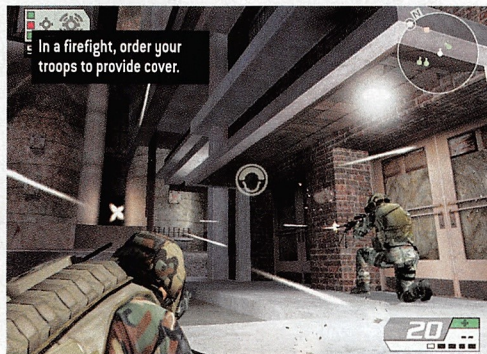
Going hand in hand with the lusty special effects are completely overhauled graphics. As anyone who played *Ghost Recon: Jungle Storm* will know, this can only be a good thing because the jungle terrain that was supposed to look sweaty and claustrophobic actually just looked like green and brown blocks and triangles. In addition to which the character models were painfully simple. The results, even this early in development, are already a huge improvement.

This might also be down to setting most of the sequel in East Asia, which affords a bit more creative freedom than designing endless sweltering jungles. Terrorist elimination, hostage rescue and bomb disposal are still the three key mission types of course, but a few more of the urban sprawls found in Clancy’s sister series *Rainbow Six* should help keep repetition at bay. You can be sure that whatever new direction *Ghost Recon 2* takes, it’ll be keeping it real.

FIRST OPINIONS

Few would have anticipated the wholesale changes that are in store, which seem to be aimed at broadening *Ghost Recon*’s appeal without shunning the hardcore simulation elements. Good thing too, with the likes of *Shellshock: Nam ‘67*, *Mercenaries* and a billion other war games looming large on the horizon.

/ JONATHAN TODD



FIGHTING FORCES

We train our sights on *Ghost Recon 2*'s battlefield rivals.



CONFLICT: VIETNAM

SETTING: 1968 Tet Offensive
MISSIONS: 14
DRIVEABLE VEHICLES? Yes

You can control any soldier in your four-man squad, but unlike *Ghost Recon 2*'s finely trained troopers, they're liable to go ape and start spraying bullets if left in the jungle alone.

ANTICIPATION RATING >>>>



MERCENARIES

SETTING: North Korea, the near future
MISSIONS: 52
DRIVEABLE VEHICLES? Hell yeah.

Offering the most freedom of the lot, *Mercenaries* allows you to choose your allegiance and turn against the UN forces... if it makes you more money.

ANTICIPATION RATING >>>>



SHELLS SHOCK: NAM '67

Setting: Vietnam, 1967. Obviously
MISSIONS: 14
Driveable vehicles? No

you're surrounded by fellow grunts who will aid you as long as you return the favour with the odd spot of covering fire.

ANTICIPATION RATING >>>>



GHOST RECON 2 FACT!

> ALL CRIED OUT

One aim is to make you feel more emotionally involved with your squad. Could this entail grown men crying?

> KEEPING IT REAL

The hardware is based upon future technology, but since this is a Clancy game don't expect laser guns.

> WHO'S WHO?

The squad consists of Nick M Salvatore (gunner), Mike Kim (marksman), and Derrick Parker (grenadier).

> TOTAL UPGRADE

According to lead artist Brian Tate, visuals have been, "Overhauled, upgraded, and improved". Snappy.

> HELLO BOYS!

Any lame Welsh sheep-shagging jokes will be punished by having your kidneys mashed.



“DEMOLISH INTERNAL
ORGANS LIKE YOU’RE
POUNDING A PUNCH BAG.”

DEATH BY DEGREES

Tekken’s Nina Williams gets her own stealth action game. But she hasn’t lost her knack of beating people to death. Nice girl.

> GENRE	ACTION ADVENTURE
> DEVELOPER	NAMCO
> PUBLISHER	SONY
> OUT	MARCH 2005
> ONLINE	NO

AS AN EXCUSE FOR LOTS OF BONE-CRUNCHING

violence, this *Tekken* spin-off starring Nina Williams is constructed around a plot any cheesy straight-to-video fighting flick would be rightly proud of. Set before the first *Tekken* game, the Irish assassin is dispatched to a luxury cruise ship to investigate a terrorist organisation whose higher powers have gathered for an underground fighting tournament. Coincidence? We think not. Naturally, Nina wipes the floor with everyone, which leads to her being imprisoned on the ship, but not before discovering that a fellow agent has gone missing. This is where you come in.

Since *Death By Degrees* isn’t a hardcore brawler in the same mould as *Tekken*, the control system has been simplified. Fortunately not at the expense of subtlety. Similar to the Jet Li game *Rise To Honour*, the left analogue stick controls Nina’s movements while the right analogue stick directs punches and kicks, or uses whatever sword or gun she’s carrying. This proves handy for taking on several enemies at once, but not so great for one-on-one encounters. Racking up combos earns points too, which can then be used to upgrade Nina’s existing moves with, or to unlock new ones.

IT’S JUST A FLESH WOUND

Given the number of action adventure games currently on the shelves that combine a little bit of combat and a little bit of stealth, there’s an emerging trend for some sort of unique gameplay feature to help each one stand out from the herd. In *Death By Degrees* it’s what the developer is calling a ‘critical hit’ targeting system that lets you demolish an enemy’s internal organs like you’re pounding a punch bag. Land a few combos to fill up the ‘focus’ gauge and you’ll get to see an X-ray view of their body. From here you can then target weak spots such as fragile bones or fleshy organs with a grisly finishing move.

The other half of *Death By Degrees* is more of a traditional stealth game. Nina will need to knock some guards out silently, hide from others, and generally avoid traps and solve puzzles using a range of athletic moves. She also carries a fingerprint scanner that unlocks doors using victims’ prints. The developer rather optimistically hopes this will encourage players to find and collect every one, and not just the correct IDs needed to progress. It’s a pity you can’t just hack off their digits and carry them around in a jar instead though.

As well as the main Story mode there’s a Challenge mode, a Sniper mode, a Hover-camera mode, a Puzzle mode and one simply called Anna. We can only hazard a guess at this point how one or two of the more self-explanatory game types will turn out, but hopefully they’ll all add some replay value. *Death by Degrees* is due to be released in March 2005, but we’ll bring you more as soon as we have it.

FIRST OPINIONS

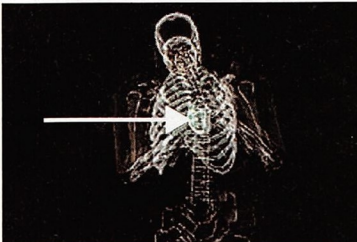
Death By Degrees looks such a stylish game that we hope it doesn’t fall into the same trap as *Rise To Honour* and end up as a semi-interactive film. The balance between out-and-out fighting and stealth seems spot-on though, while the inclusion of moves from *Tekken* should help avoid accusations that the combat is oversimplified in any way.

/ JONATHAN TODD

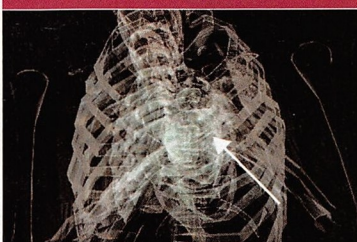


CRITICAL CONDITION

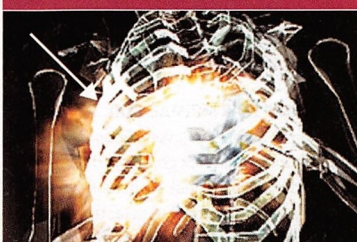
A typical injury inflicted by Nina explained in excruciating detail.



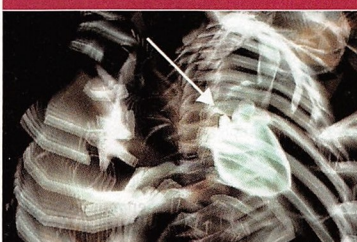
A fully functioning heart in its normal state prior to a petulant pounding from Nina.



Arrow denotes angle of fist as it impacts on the fragile ribcage of the enemy fighter.



Bones and organs explode with pretty colours as warm, sticky, life-giving claret escapes.



A painful death beckons as the battered heart pumps its last droplet of the red stuff.



Fire dual pistols in different directions.



So skilled she doesn't need to look at enemies.



Better practise those Tekken moves now.



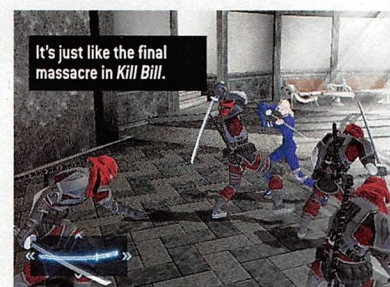
Slap the right analogue stick to pull of combos.



Continue the sweep to hit the next guy too.



There are some stealth sections. Honest.



It's just like the final massacre in *Kill Bill*.



About half the game is set on the boat.



Move one of those guns behind your back.



Sever an artery to release a fountain.



DEATH BY DEGREES FACT!

> TITANIC STRUGGLE

There are over 140 rooms to explore on the boat and the game will take around 20 hours to complete.

> SIBLING RIVALRY

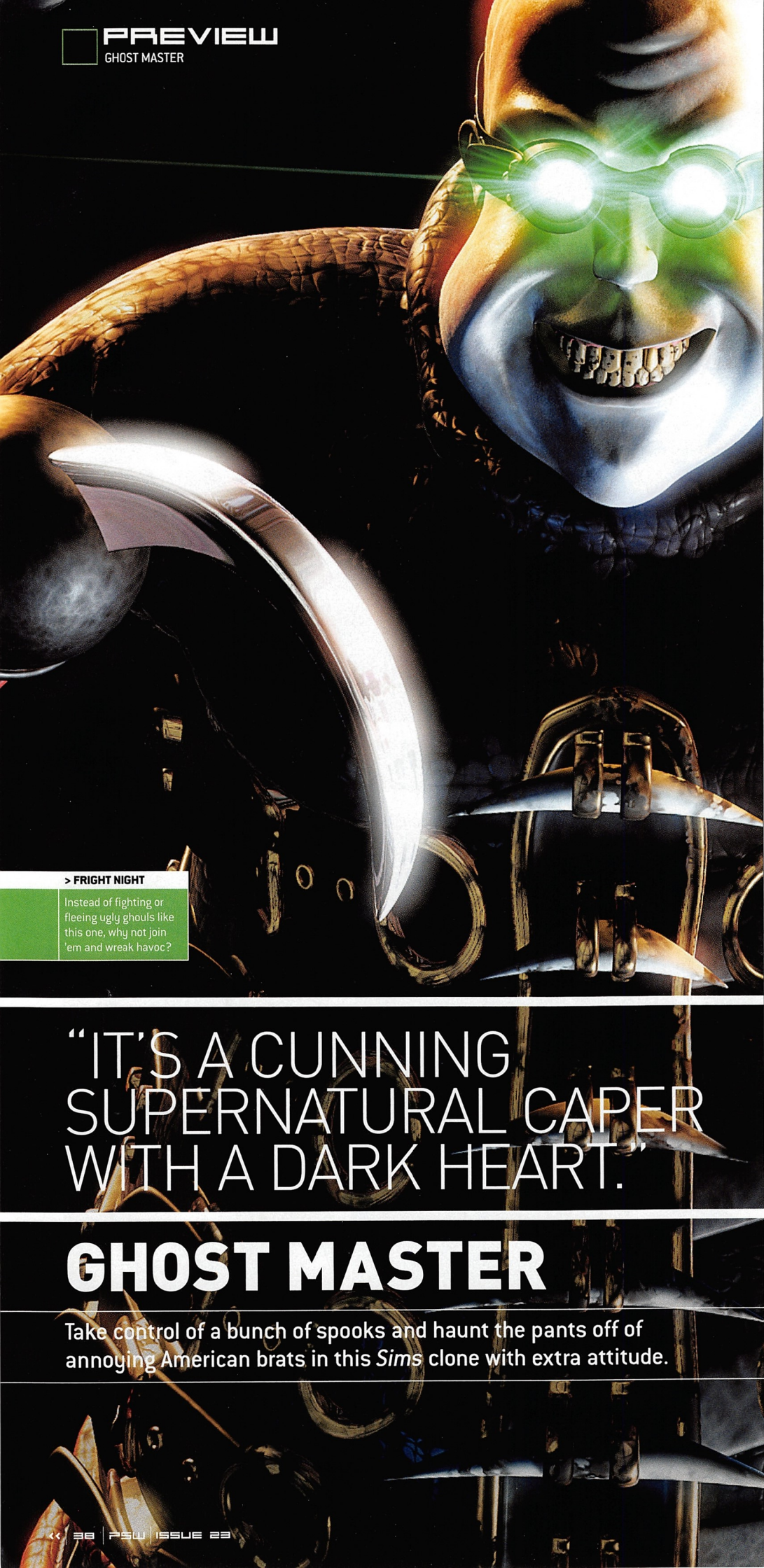
Some characters from the first *Tekken* game make a guest appearance, including Nina's sister, Anna.

> TEKK YOUR TIME

If you're not familiar with the *Tekken* games or Nina's character, a tutorial will guide you through her moves.

> WATCH THE PROS

The in-game movie sequences have been created by the same studio that did the *Onimusha 2* cinematics.



> FRIGHT NIGHT

Instead of fighting or fleeing ugly ghouls like this one, why not join 'em and wreak havoc?

"IT'S A CUNNING
SUPERNATURAL CAPER
WITH A DARK HEART."

GHOST MASTER

Take control of a bunch of spooks and haunt the pants off of annoying American brats in this *Sims* clone with extra attitude.

> GENRE	STRATEGY
> DEVELOPER	SICK PUPPIES
> PUBLISHER	EMPIRE
> OUT	JUNE
> ONLINE	NO

IF THERE'S ONE THING MISSING FROM THE

Sims it's the ability to be truly vindictive. God knows we've tried. There was the attempted drowning incident – where we blocked all exits out of the swimming pool, followed by the starvation challenge – where we placed a Sim inside a bare room and then removed the doors and windows. Unfortunately, neither worked.

Ghost Master is basically a crueller version of *The Sims*, where your goal in almost every level is to frighten and manipulate people so they enter certain rooms or perform specific actions. The game might be wrapped in a cartoon-style presentation, complete with cheesy voiceover and groansome puns, but we like the mean-spiritedness of it all, especially compared to the collar-stiffening political correctness of *The Sims*.

Your ability to haunt is governed by how much ectoplasm you have available. The resource is replenished by the amount of terror your spooks cause, but drained by using higher powers – there's always a balance that needs to be found between recovering plasm and unleashing your arsenal of frights. Each ghost possesses different powers and fetters, which are the types of locations to which they can be bound in the mortal realm. With each mission having its own available fetters and tasks, plus an info bar that tells you the type of haunting each mortal is susceptible and resistant to, you can prevent plasm being wasted unnecessarily.

SHUFFLE OFF THIS MORTAL COIL

After a couple of routine levels, *Ghost Master* introduces more complex goals such as freeing imprisoned haunTERS. Most of these rescue bids are optional, but a handful of objectives can only be completed with the help of a trapped ghost, and releasing them often means following a pretty convoluted procedure. For example, one apparition is bound to her body lying in the morgue. First you need to scare away the evidence room guard and then find a way to lure the detective who double-crossed her into the evidence room using one of your 'attract' ghosts. Others are far simpler, such as the ghoul trapped in a shack that can be freed by blowing down the building. The puzzles might be elaborate, but thankfully the solutions are never that obscure.

Mortals present further problems. Some levels dictate that you can't scare anyone away from a building fully, which proves tricky when the main task requires the use of powers within their range. There are also spiritual mortals such as witches and priests, who are resistant to certain powers and will fight back.

Don't be put off by the 'strategy' label. This has nothing to do with guiding turn-based armies around a tiny board. *Ghost Master* is actually more like *The Sims* with added puzzles and more clearly defined, time-pressure goals. The light-hearted tone conceals a cunning supernatural caper with a dark heart, and there's a real challenge lurking in here too.

FIRST OPINION

An original concept is matched by canny gameplay mechanics that keep things simple without losing the strategic element. If *Ghost Master* can keep the comical *Sims* tone but boost it up with a spot of genuine nastiness, it should go down very well.

/ JONATHAN TODD

SHOW SOME SPIRIT

How to achieve maximum scares from your six types of ghost.



SPRITES

Gremlins, Hordes and Wisps can disrupt any kind of electrical appliance such as microwaves and TVs, leaving mortals confused.



DISTURBANCES

Fetches, Manes, Poltergeists, Sandmen and Spooks haunt mortals directly. Poltergeists go for kids and Sandmen target those who are asleep.



ELEMENTALS

These ghosts are known simply as Air, Earth, Water and Fire elementals and as such haunt areas based on one of these elements.



VAPOURS

Attach Banshees, Thunder Spirits, Apparitions and Wendigos to places where mortals must pass through, such as hallways and roads.



FRIGHTENERS

Phantoms, Shadows, Wights and Tricksters are similar to Horrors, but are much more effective when bound to 'emotional' objects.



HORRORS

Headless Horsemen, Spectres and Wraiths haunt areas and possess objects associated with murder or violence, such as graves.



GHOST MASTER FACT!

> SUM UP

There are 50 ghosts to manage, 150 powers to use, 100 humans to scare, and 16 levels to master, stat fans!

> FILM BUFF

The level names are puns on famous horror movies, such as The Calamityville Horror and Poultrygeist.

> GHOST WATCH

A spook's-eye view camera lets you view the action from the perspective of humans or ghosts.

> SPECCY HEAVEN

Creative director Gregg Barnett worked on the legendary *Horace Goes Skiing* and *The Hobbit*.



> TWO WHEELS

Flat Out is as much about big air, crazy stunts and wrecking cars as it is about racing.

“IT’S EASY TO GET SIDETRACKED JUST SMASHING INTO STUFF.”

FLAT OUT

Welcome to a game that’s crazier than the Saddam Hussein and more destructive than George W Bush.

> GENRE	RACING
> DEVELOPER	BUGBEAR
> PUBLISHER	EMPIRE
> OUT	SEPTEMBER
> ONLINE	NO

EIGHT CHEAP AND CHEERFUL RUST-BUCKETS

line up side by side on the startline. Ahead, the road narrows and there’s only room for two cars at most. Whichever way you look at it, things just doesn’t add up. There are going to be six casualties before the first bend is rounded. And if the majority do somehow make it through unscathed, that stack of logs and barrels left carelessly in the middle of the course will surely see ‘em off.

Flat Out boasts some amazing physics, especially when you come into contact with objects. In fact, it’s easy to get sidetracked just deliberately smashing into stuff, instead of trying to actually win races. Some objects are strategically placed to create carnage for chasing drivers when hit, such as a ladder that props up a sign or poles that hold up girders. You can even clip the hook of a crane that’s facing away from the track to send it spinning around into a chasing driver’s screen.

The damage to the cars is pretty incredible too, with panels hanging off or being ripped away altogether and a smart crumple effect when the outer shell takes a battering. You even get to see your driver hurtle through the windshield when your car comes to a sudden stop, propelling him a good 50 metres down the road from his vehicle.

IN A SPIN

The best tracks are undoubtedly the most hazardous ones. The Forest track is like a UK rally stage from the *Colin McRae* games, but with logs dumped in the middle of the road and ramps strategically placed near parked trucks for you to jump over. For the more serious racer there’s an oval-shaped NASCAR circuit and a proper tarmac racetrack, but even the latter is chockfull with bonnet-crumpling hazards and crafty shortcuts.

None of this takes away from the fact that *Flat Out* requires some serious concentration if you’re to compete, let alone win. The steering is extremely sensitive and on the icy and sandy surfaces even the slightest deviation from the centre of the track can send your car spinning. It’s like steering a shopping trolley with one hand down a narrow aisle at Sainsburys without bumping into a stack of tinned beans. But when the resulting carnage is so devastatingly represented, who cares if the twitchy steering forces the occasional prang?

For our part we reckon *Flat Out* puts the fun back into rally games while still being a fairly hardcore racer. If you’re the sort who runs out of patience with the *Colin McRae Rally* games after an hour or so, and spends the rest of the time driving head-on into surrounding architecture and foliage in an effort to crumple Colin’s motor, then *Flat Out* is the game for you.

FIRST OPINIONS

Not quite the undemanding racer the screenshots might lead you to believe. It’s a great laugh wrecking stuff and holding competitions to see who can launch the driver the furthest, *and* you get a serious racing game to boot. Could be a classic.

/ JONATHAN TODD



FLAT OUT FACT!

> KEEPING TRACK

There are 17 courses with three track variations for each one. We make that 51 races in total.

> IT'S JUST A SCRATCH

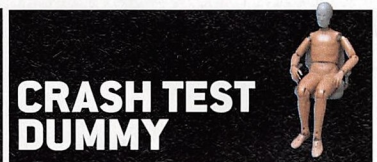
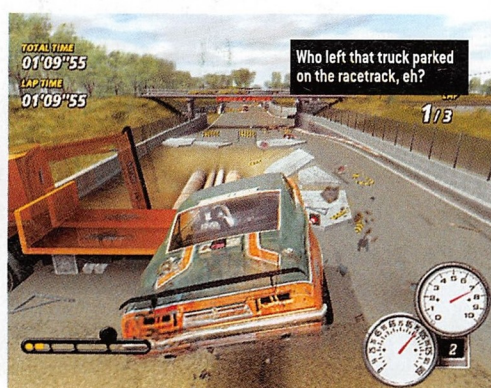
Licensing cars was deliberately avoided because manufacturers often insist their cars can't be damaged.

> UNDER THE BONNET

Visit the garage in Career mode to tune your car's engine, drivetrain, clutch, flywheel, transmission and differential.

> FOR THE LONG JUMP

Extra challenges are planned such as seeing how far your driver can fly when he goes through the windscreen.



CRASH TEST DUMMY

So exactly how much damage can you do to your motor?



The carnage begins with the boot flying open and the rear bumper hanging off.



The bonnet is next to go, and you can also see how the front and sides are crumpled.



The entire front plating has detached and there's no door on the passenger side.



It's a wonder he hasn't been crushed with the rest of the car. Complete destruction!



> MASH IT UP!

It's a top-down mini racer with lashings of destruction and massive guns. Genius!

"QUICKFIRE, SUPER-STYLISTED RACING FOR OVERGROWN CHILDREN."

MASHED

Move over *Gran Turismo 4* – one of this year's most fiendishly addictive racing games ditches yawnsome realism for nail-biting arcade action.

> GENRE	RACING
> DEVELOPER	SUPERSONIC
> PUBLISHER	EMPIRE
> OUT	JUNE
> ONLINE	NO

MASHED IS A RACING GAME. YOU KNOW, WITH

cars and tracks and that. But it's not some trial and error trawl through a muddy rally course. Nor is it a hyper-realistic shiny car collecting title. It's a game in which you race tiny cars round stupid top-down twisty tracks against your mates, all on the same screen. It makes you scream and swear and play again and again. It's quickfire, super-stylised racing for overgrown children, and it's shaping up to be the best multiplayer racer seen on PS2 in a long, long while.

This concept is so simple you'll wonder why nobody's done it before. And then you'll remember that they have. At length in fact, with the series of *Micro Machines* games. For the uninitiated, these saw you drive a toy-sized vehicle around bedroom, garage and kitchen-themed courses, viewing the action from a top-down perspective. It all got incredibly addictive, especially when you got three other mates to join in with the help of a Multitap. Whoever drove slowly enough to get pushed off the bottom of the screen was chucked out of the race. Guess what? *Mashed* does the same thing, which is not that surprising given that some of the *Mashed* team previously worked on *Micro Machines*.

PARTY OF FOUR

Mashed prods the old top-down racing concept into some kind of modern shape and gives it a few new twists that the old *Micro Machines* games didn't have. Weapons pick-ups are everywhere, but you can also launch targeted air strikes when your car's out of the game. The cutesy but ultimately annoying idea of racing tiny cars around has been thrown out the window. *Mashed* is more about blowing your adversaries up than travelling in tight racing lines. Helping to keep play fluid is the smart overhead camera, which keeps all players on the one screen. Bunch together round bends, and the camera will zoom in to an almost replay-like shot. Pull away, and the cars look like tiny ants in a giant landscape.

That's multiplayer. In single-player some races have to be played from the more conventional chase perspective. These races are a lot less fun, although we suspect this is more due to the insane difficulty of the early version we played. Even so, this mode won't delight half as much as the good ol' top-down view. The feel is far too cartoonish for you to ever believe you're racing real vehicles, for a start.

This isn't to say that *Mashed* is looking ugly. Graphics are already smooth and sweet with cars and tracks being detailed enough to make everything look presentable. Our only quibble at the moment is that the zooming camera means you're never quite sure when you'll be dropped off the edge of the screen. Oh, and you'll have to learn the courses if you want to do really well, because if you're the race leader you'll have only split seconds to take every corner. We're not too bothered about that though – it's too much fun.

FIRST OPINIONS

Mashed isn't going to set the racing world on fire. No, scratch that. It *is* going to set the racing world on fire, and we're going to be there to watch it burn. In fact, *Mashed* could be an essential purchase for every aspiring boy racer. Yep, we're hooked alright...

/ JOFF BROWN



Laying mines will leave rivals all over the place.



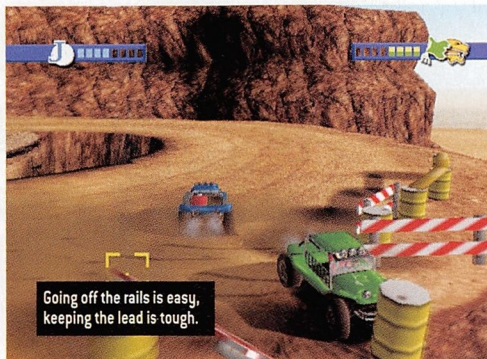
The camera zooms in when there are fewer cars on the road.



Too many smashes, and you've lost the race.



Car models are detailed, but rarely seen close-up.



Going off the rails is easy, keeping the lead is tough.



Icy courses make for nail-biting slides. We love it!



Mortar cannon? Why not? It's all about the weapons.

2D OR NOT 2D?

Four old top-down franchises in sore need of updating.

SMASH TV (1990)



▲ **HIGH CONCEPT:** You and a gun.

▼ **LOWDOWN:** Hundreds of enemies, coming at you from every angle. And nowhere to hide. Previous attempts to move this kind of gameplay into the future have messed it up. We want a new *Smash TV*.

CANNON FODDER (1993)



▲ **HIGH CONCEPT:** You and whose army?

▼ **LOWDOWN:** Take control of a squad of tiny men and watch them die in hideously amusing ways. The mix of easy-to-handle strategy and dark humour would surely make it a winner on PS2.

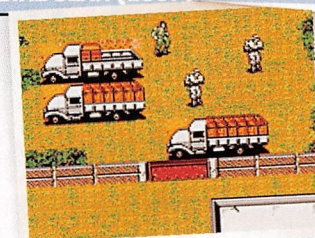
COMMANDO (1983)



▲ **HIGH CONCEPT:** You and a gun again.

▼ **LOWDOWN:** You go up the screen, killing one and all. Surely this is at the core of what makes a good game. What do you mean, we're clinging to outdated notions of simplistic gameplay? Bah!

METAL GEAR (1987)



▲ **HIGH CONCEPT:** You and a mullet.

▼ **LOWDOWN:** Forgotten Nintendo game that had you sneaking past guards with innovative hide and seek gameplay. They could do a 3D version and call it something like *Metal Gear Solid*. Oh, right.



MASHED FACT!

> **HIT ME BABY**
Pick-ups include oil slicks, mines and missiles to make racing all the more dangerously addictive.

> **HAVE SOME!**
Players can race as part of a team, using bully-boy tactics to batter their opponents out of the way.

> **COURSE YOU CAN**
Instead of being based on kitchens and pool tables, the courses in *Mashed* include temples and icy military bases.

> **A LA MODE**
Other new play modes have the tempting titles of Beat the Bomb, Hare and Hound and Keep the Flag.

> UP AND OVER

How exactly do you compete in the high jump with a dance mat? Hop, skip, jump?



“THE ADDITION OF A DANCE MAT IS A STROKE OF ABSOLUTE GENIUS.”

ATHENS 2004

Prepare to mash your controllers into tiny pieces and dance your way through the 100m with this Olympic-themed track and field game.

> GENRE	SPORTS
> DEVELOPER	EUROCOM
> PUBLISHER	SONY
> OUT	JULY
> ONLINE	NO

AS PREPARATIONS FOR THE ATHENS OLYMPICS

enter their final phase, the finishing touches for the official game of the world's premier sporting event are also being applied. But will *Athens 2004* be worthy of its Olympic licence, or is it doomed to end up as just another half-baked *Track and Field* clone clogging up the shelves?

Well, there's a broad selection of events that take in both the button-bashing dynamics of vintage track and field games, plus some more esoteric offerings that are based on analogue stick twiddling. The full list boasts 26 events in disciplines that include track, field, swimming, gymnastics, equestrian, weightlifting, archery and shooting. Some of the events are amazingly easy (shot putt and vault), some are bizarre and overly complex (men's floor) and a few of the new events add extra finesse to proceedings. The archery is particularly enjoyable, requiring players to position a constantly shifting reticule over a target, a process that combines canny analogue accuracy and good timing.

DANCING ALL THE WAY TO ATHENS

The most interesting and innovative thing about *Athens 2004* is the way a dance mat can be used to participate in certain events with. The only event where a mat is compulsory is the Woman's Floor Exercise, but it's possible to use one with many other events. The thought of taking on the 100m with a dance mat fills us with a mixture of wry smiles and stomach churning fear; we can imagine it being amazingly good fun, but we're not keen on the prospect of having to do some 'proper' exercise.

The central appeal of titles like this is a decent Multiplayer mode. With that in mind, it's no surprise to discover the game offering Multitap support to let you and three of your buddies hammer it out. While the new events are likely to appeal during more sober sessions, this game is undoubtedly going to come into its own post pub, when machismo comes to the fore. Rest assured that it'll be the button-bashing events that'll settle most arguments as to who's the fittest member of your group. Graphics are clean and crisp enough to make sure any photo-finish arguments will be happily settled, with good likenesses of the various athletes competing. Not that we have a clue who any of them are, of course, but it's nice to be thorough.

It's hard to criticise games like *Athens 2004*. Because athletics is already an established gaming genre, doing anything too innovative is more likely to be frowned upon than lauded. Despite this, the addition of a dance mat is a stroke of absolute genius – it's simple, it's innovative and it's inspired.

We expect this to be a more than competently done Olympic game, toying with the classic template without changing things too much. If you find yourself caught up in the Olympic hype this winter, you may well do worse than to pick this up. It certainly beats spending a few hours down the local gym, that's for sure. ...

FIRST OPINIONS

It's a button-mashing athletics game by the numbers with added dance mat craziness and some analogue stick touching. Not likely to revolutionise games then, but it should provide plenty of fun for pissed up twenty-somethings.

/ MARK SORRELL



ATHENS 2004 **FACT!**

> STADIUM

Seven Olympic stadiums are fully and accurately rendered to help create that air of authenticity.

> SEAL OF APPROVAL

This will be the only officially licensed Olympic game on PlayStation2 this summer.

> SUITS WITH BALLS ON

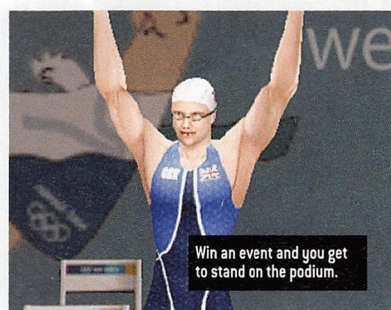
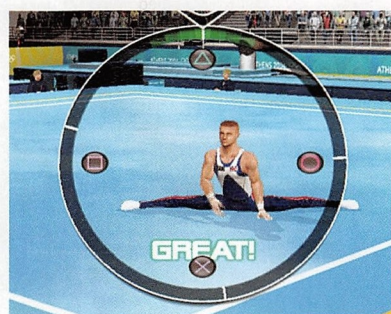
The athletes have all been motion captured to ensure absolute accuracy in their movement.

> PERIPHERAL

This is the first game of its type to utilise dance mat technology. Could be fatal for fat, lazy people.



“TAKING ON THE 100M WITH A DANCE MAT FILLS US WITH STOMACH CHURNING FEAR.”



BROKEN JOYSTICKS

Athens 2004 is sure to batter your controls and frustrate your brain. A bit like these four other tough 'uns.



STUNTMAN

Possibly the most frustrating game in the history of frustrating games, fail a level and be faced with one of the longest loading times in PS2 history. Pad smashing is never more than a moment away.

Life Expectancy: 25 minutes.



ROCKY

When you hit the canvas, the only way to get back up is to mash the button like your pride and social standing depended on it, and let's face it, they do. Your buttons won't like it, mind.

Life Expectancy: Six hours.



APE ESCAPE 2

Remember the boat? Rowing with the analogue sticks was mind-bendingly bizarre and also hell on the sticks. Okay, so no-one rows with their thumbs, granted, but the game was actually quite good.

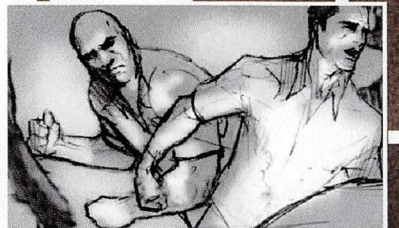
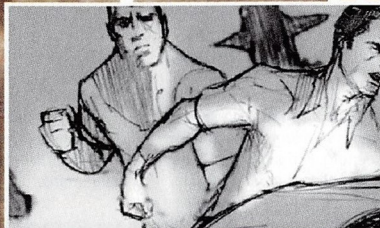
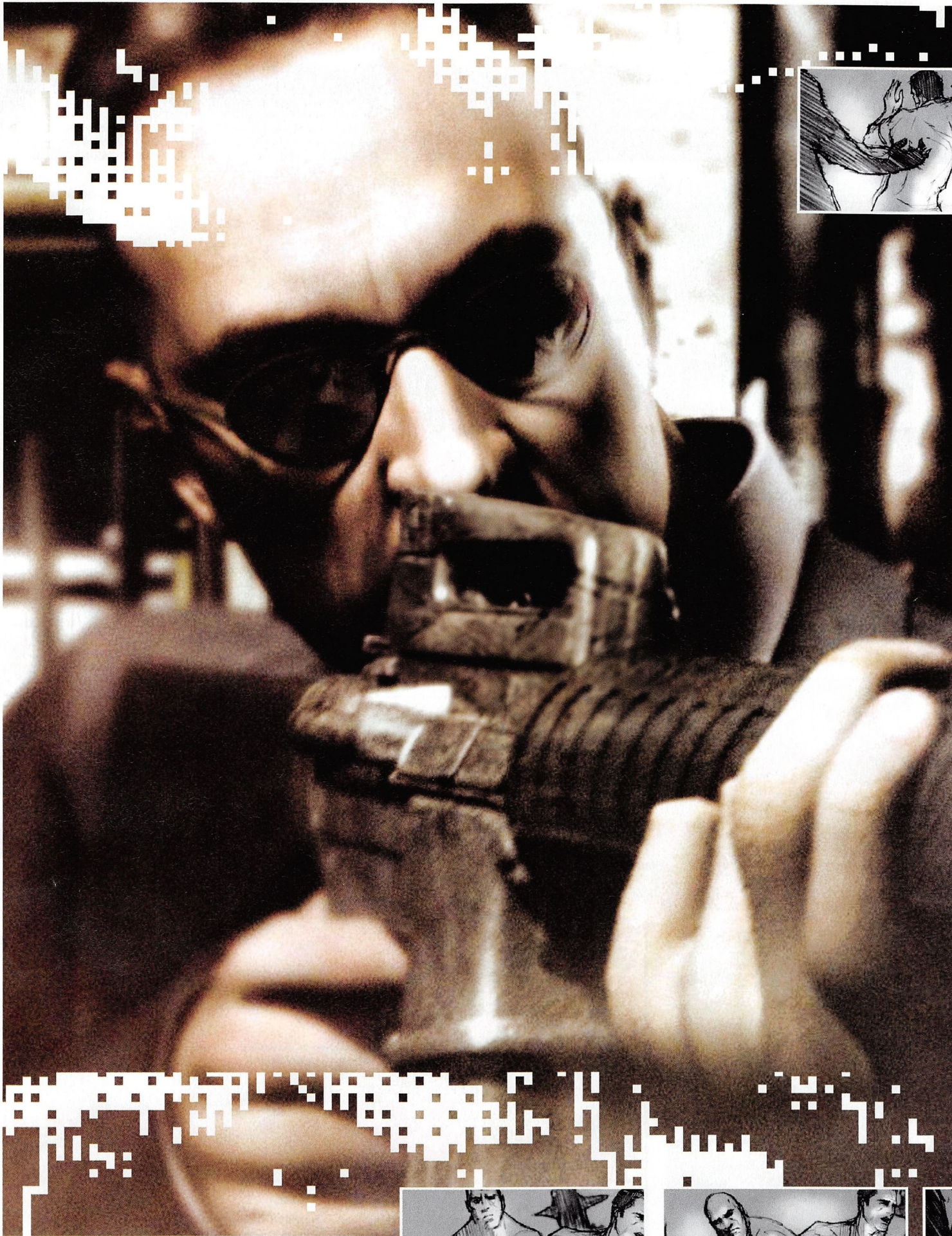
Life Expectancy: Two days.

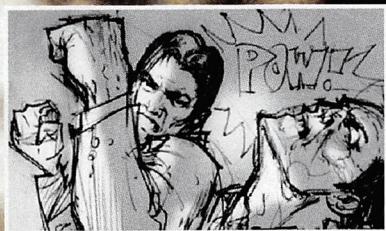


GITAROO MAN

What a quirky little rhythm actioner this was. When you got to the shark level and the hits started flying in, you had to press buttons faster than they were designed to cope with. Dangerous.

Life Expectancy: One week.





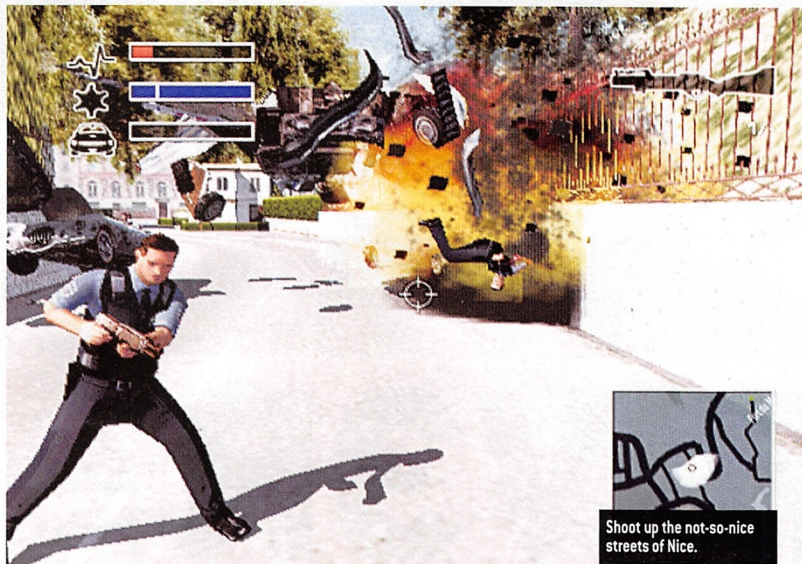
> GENRE ACTION ADVENTURE
> DEVELOPER REFLECTIONS
> PUBLISHER ATARI
> OUT JUNE
> ONLINE NO

DRIV3R

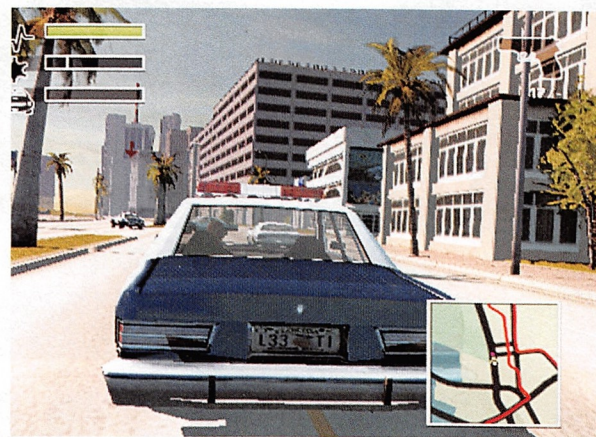


Thinking of taking Tanner on a driving holiday this summer? Then you'll be needing some insider info. Luckily, everything you need to know about *Driv3r*'s plot, missions and characters is right here.

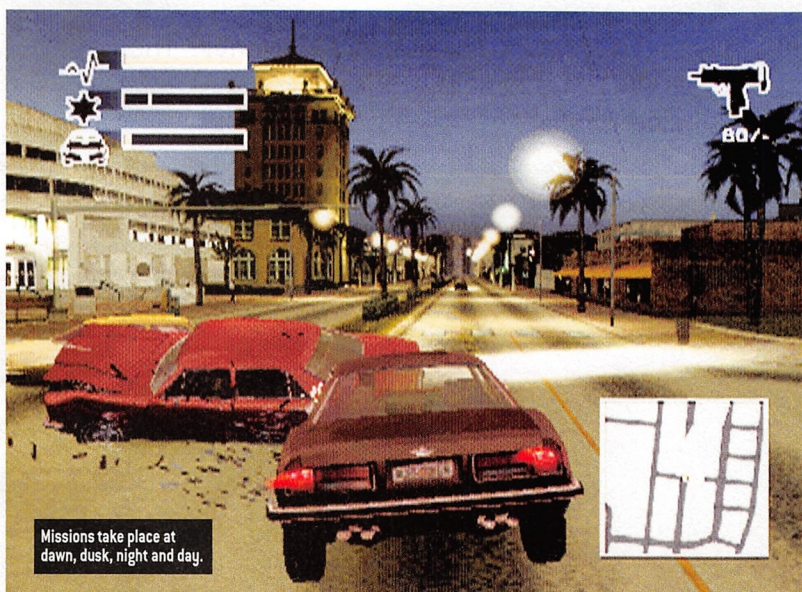




Shoot up the not-so-nice streets of Nice.



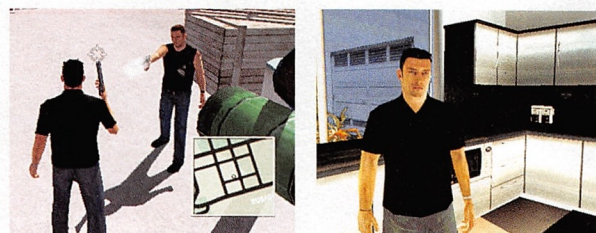
Keep up with the police to reach your mission target.



Missions take place at dawn, dusk, night and day.



Lose sight of enemies and you'll fail the mission. Simple.

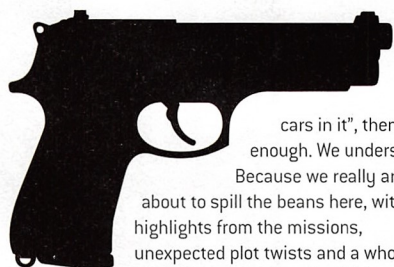


PSST... OVER HERE. NO, OVER HERE! YOU LOOK LIKE the sort of reader who likes a bit of forbidden fruit, if you know what we mean. Yeah, we thought so. Something about your crossed eyes and hairy palms. Fancy a look at the plot and mission structure of *Driv3r*, ages before it lands on the shelves? Go on, you know you want to.

But first, here's a little warning for the curious: if you shriek and faint away at the sight of monstrous spoilers, then this isn't for you. If you'd like to play *Driv3r* from scratch, not knowing much more than, "It's got some,

uninitiated — a small entrée before the main course, if you like. *Driv3r* is the first PlayStation2 game in the *Driver* series. When *Grand Theft Auto* was only a two-dimensional map-reading exercise and *True Crime* and *The Getaway* weren't even a steely glint in their creators' eyes, *Driver* was busy mashing it up on PSone, inventing the whole action driving genre we know and venerate today. *Driv3r* has been in development for what seems like elephant's years, and is finally set to make an appearance later this summer. The reason is that

muggy morning. Cop cars screech round corners to the site of a shootout. Two men are striding through the streets, taking out policemen with multiple shots like they're shooting fish in a barrel. One of the criminals is particularly nasty — he's wielding a sawed-off shotgun, reloading with deadly calm as the bullets ricochet around him. Our man Tanner shows up and the gunfight begins, only to end abruptly with Tanner being rushed to an emergency ward. His heart rate drops as the beeps on the monitor go from regular to a flat whine — can our hero



cars in it", then fair enough. We understand.

Because we really are about to spill the beans here, with highlights from the missions, unexpected plot twists and a whole load of gameplay details. If this sounds too much for you, turn over the next few pages with your eyes carefully averted, and go read another bit of the mag. There's some subs info on p.96, if you can stand the excitement. Off you go...

Right then. Henceforth we shall assume that the rest of you are hardened info-junkies, ready for this year's biggest fix. Let's start with a quick roundup for the

"SCREECHING ROUND THE TIGHTEST HANDBRAKE TURNS."

developer Reflections has been cramming in as many cars, roads and missions as it possibly can. While it's no free-roaming adventure like *Grand Theft Auto*, the action does take place in three fairly sprawling cities. Starting with Miami, you'll head out to Nice in the south of France before ending up in Turkey's capital, Istanbul, for the final showdown. But we have a suspicion you knew all about that. Here's what you don't know.

LIFE'S A BEACH

The first thing you'll see on starting the game is a very tasty opening video. The setting is Istanbul on a misty,

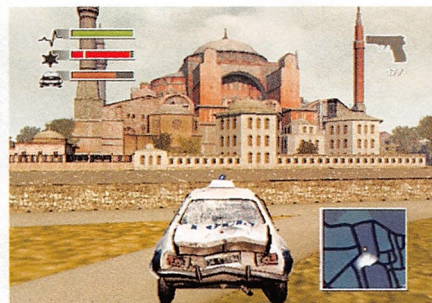
really be dead before it's all begun?

Suddenly, we're flashed back to sun-bleached Miami, six months earlier, where the game begins with Tanner striding purposely into the Miami Police Department HQ for a spot of preparatory target practice in the shooting range. Once you've mastered the on-foot controls, the alarm is raised. There's a siege situation in progress. Some chump called Baccus is holed up in a downtown crack-house, and the first test of your driving prowess is to keep up with the other cop cars headed down there. This is where you realise that although the game looks almost supernaturally better than the PSone *Driver* titles,

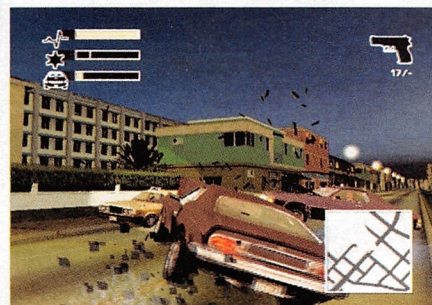
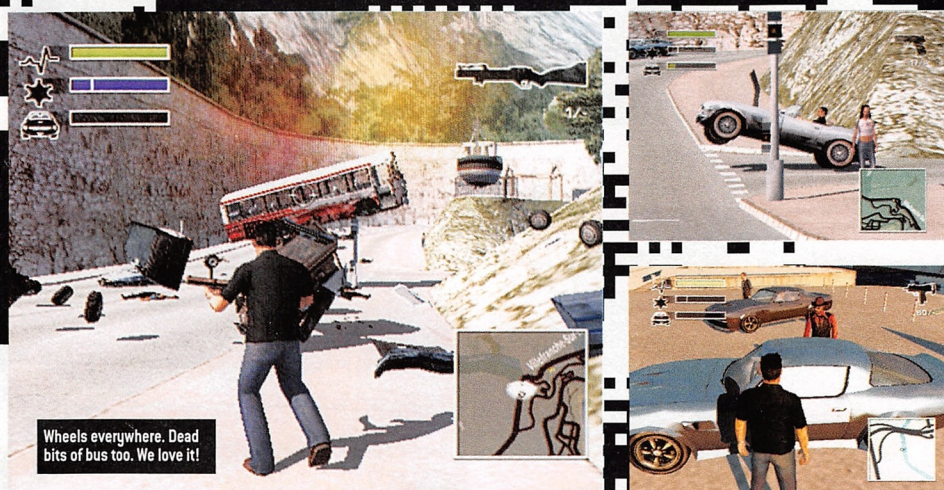


EXTRA! EXTRA! READ ALL ABOUT IT!

For the first time anywhere, we can reveal *Driv3r*'s other modes.



In Take a Ride mode, you can explore the three cities once you've unlocked them in the main game. There's a ton of amazing things to find, including Istanbul's awesome mosques.



Mini-games include Quick Chase mode, Quick Getaway mode and Survival mode that pits you against the cops. And something else called Trail Blazer mode that makes you run over traffic cones. Which is actually a bit dull.



Unlock cool comedy vehicles as you progress through the game, including this forklift truck with workable lift. You'll be able to play around with them in Take a Ride mode.

it's kept the pedigree handling from those games. A touch of the Triangle button has you screeching round the very tightest handbrake turns, and right from the start you'll be fighting to keep up with the pack.

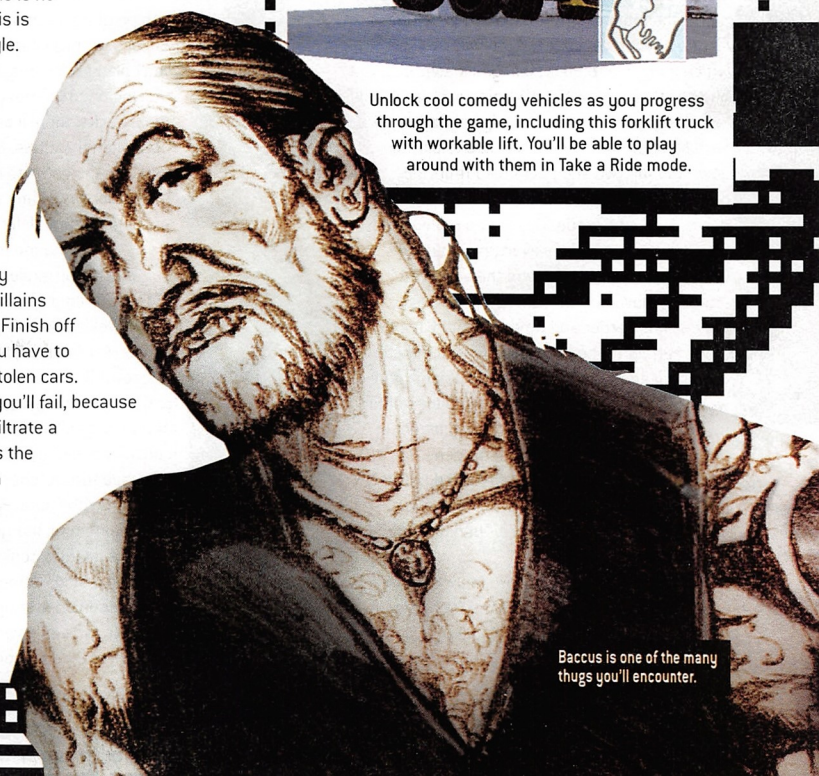
Get to Baccus' hideout and you'll have to take out a handful of villains as they try to storm out. It's a good time to try out the 'Tanner's eye view', which turns the whole game into something more like a traditional shooter. You can theoretically play the whole game from this first-person perspective, which defaults to the in-car view when you enter a vehicle. Although it's immersive, it's sometimes hard to tell what you're doing when you need to navigate stretches of tricky ground or jump to new areas. However, it's just what you need for shooting.

Suddenly, Baccus has jumped in a car and you're 'jacking the nearest auto and going after him. Right from the start, you'll see how demanding the game is when it comes to in-car action. Falter at your first jump out of the car park, and you'll crash into the other police vehicles, turn over and lose your quarry before you've even started. Stay on four wheels and you'll be after him like a shot. Like most of the chases in *Driv3r*, Baccus won't always stick to the same path every time. So forget about memorising set routes, and concentrate on watching where the car in front is headed. If it's out of sight, you're bound to fail the mission straight away. Crash, and you won't recover. You'll find yourself wishing that *Reflections* had gone the *Grand Theft Auto* route and allowed you to mow down the lampposts because they're suddenly

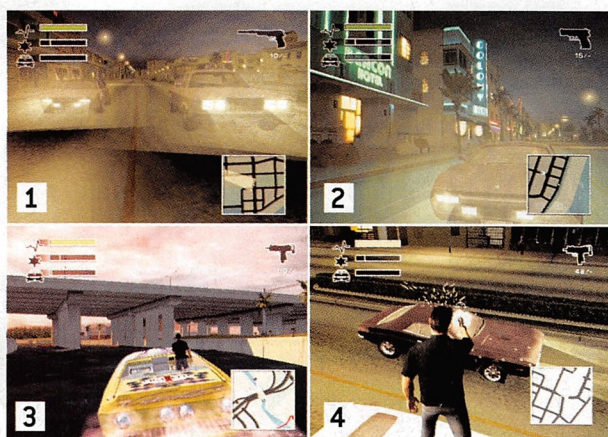
everywhere, like some kind of horrible steel forest. One prang and it's game over, your car wrapped around a motionless metal pillar. This is no cartoon-like free-for-all. This is hard driving in a movie style. Make no mistake: *Driv3r* wants you to drive properly. And fast too.

GUNNING THE MOTOR

But now it's time for a little more shootout action. Going to a hotel rooftop, you blast your way through a gang of armed villains and down to a parking lot. Finish off the criminals here, and you have to nick off with one of their stolen cars. Damage it too much, and you'll fail, because you're about to try and infiltrate a car smuggling ring. Calita's the girl to impress here, and in the cut-scene that follows, you watch her execute a traitor. Tanner doesn't even blink as he watches the luckless victim die. She warns him that if he >



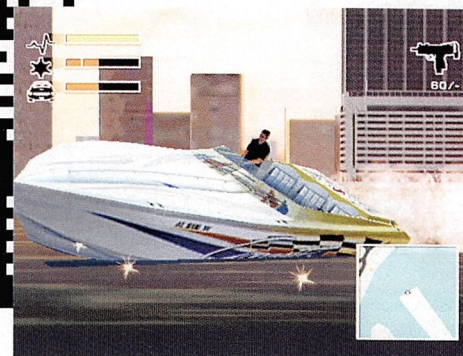
Baccus is one of the many thugs you'll encounter.



IT'S NOT GTA, OK?

But there are still a few unintentional similarities...

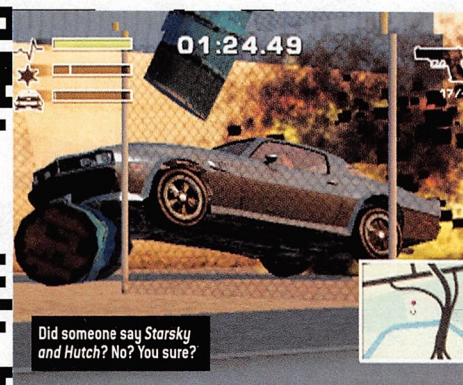
1. Of course, you can stop any car you see and get in whenever you like.
2. Miami's neon beach front looks oddly familiar after *Vice City*.
3. Like the last *GTA*, you can steal boats and bikes in *Driv3r*.
4. In between missions, go crazy and start killing everyone. Why not?



Controlling boats is fast, fluid and very straightforward now.



Explosions. We just can't get enough of them. More! More!



Did someone say *Starsky and Hutch*? No? You sure?



Take out the Turkish police in a thrilling mission.

acts up, he'll get a bullet through the noggin too. From here on, Tanner's a driver again, working undercover for the MPD while getting the chance to pull off the most exciting illegal capers of his career.

One of Miami's most fun missions follows, in which you have to bust up a rival's estate by hurtling through every half-built shack and exploding barrel on the lot. It's straight out of *Starsky and Hutch*, and it's a blast. Hold down the top two shoulder buttons on the pad and you'll see the action in slowed down 'Thrillcam' mode. This isn't a replay – it's all live – but it gives everything a movie-like perspective that renders the action in stunning slow motion. Best of all, squeeze the buttons harder and time slows down even more. Perfect for head-on collisions, sphincter-clenching drops and massive explosions. And what explosions! Not only do huge pillars of fire rocket up around you, but anything caught in the blast is shattered into smithereens. You'll end up causing explosions just for the hell of it in the free-roaming Take a Ride mode, then getting rumbled by the police. Then blowing them up too, of course.

Anyway, back to the action. Tanner's won Calita's trust and so now it's time for him to take on bigger jobs. By the way, all this plot exposition is very close to *Driv3r*'s heart. In



between every mission, you'll be treated to short movies that show what's happened 'previously on *Driv3r*', in case you've quite literally lost the plot. And it's worth pointing out that although we're giving you missions in chronological order, in the game you won't play all the missions in one city before moving on to the next. Thanks to some flashbacks, there'll be plenty of moving around between the cities. Pretty cunning, as it allows the game to set you some tougher missions in Miami and Nice, rather than saving them all for Istanbul.

A boat-bound mission sees Tanner picking up explosives from a shack out at sea, then planting them on board a yacht. As well as shooting from your boat, you can also swim to safety – take that, Tommy Vercetti! But we don't recommend you reach for your swimming cap when there are villains around, or you'll end up as smartly-suited fish-food. And one of your last missions in Miami is to escape the clutches of Lomaz, a creep who's fallen out with Calita. His goons try to assassinate you, but you have to bust your way out of his island stronghold. It's a great mixture of driving and shooting, with car after car of gun-toting criminals attempting to ruin your escape.

It reminds us of a very similar mission in *Driver 2*, to be honest.

NICE TO SEE YOU

Now that Tanner's nice and cosy with the crims, he's able to discover that the real head honcho is a fella called Jericho. Once he was a loyal henchman, but in an electrifying movie scene we see him assassinate his own paymaster in a lift. Jericho's the terrifying shooter we've already seen take Tanner out in Istanbul, in the very first movie of the game. Meanwhile, there's more carjacking for Tanner as he takes a bike to the streets of Nice and 'collects' a couple of cars from the good citizens of the French Riviera. To add a bit of spice to what's really just a car-finding mission, you have to drive them onto the back of a moving lorry, *Italian Job* style.

Then it's time to steal a truck loaded with explosives from under the noses of your rivals. A pitched gunfight should see you triumphantly making off with the vehicle, but there's a hitch. The stuff in the back is highly volatile, and if you chuck it around too much it'll go off. Even a handbrake turn can trigger the explosion, so it's going to be a battle taking it up the winding mountain paths to its final destination. Particularly as there are car-bound goons on the road, ready to bash you off.

Elsewhere, Tanner's made some powerful enemies and a bomb has been planted under his open-top sports car. If he travels under 40 miles an hour it will – you guessed it – explode. Cue a long and unbelievably tense sequence in which you must fight through the seaside traffic, unload a passenger and return the car bomb to its maker, all without losing speed for more than a few seconds.



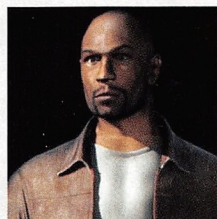
BAD COMPANY

So what really happens to the guys and gals in Tanner's world?



TANNER

It all ends with Tanner getting rather badly shot up. But you don't get to see how or why until you reach Istanbul. And he goes off the rails again, too, meaning even the cops aren't on his side.



JONES

Tanner's partner narrates the story, as well as quite literally riding shotgun on some of the missions. We think he's been criminally underused for most of *Driv3r*, if we're being honest. Excuse the pun.



BACCUS

Small time is the word to describe this thug. He's Tanner's key to bigger things, however, and his penchant for pointless danger means it's pretty easy to run the mindless wastrel to ground.



CALITA

Sexy, edgy, ruthless. Calita's a stone cold bitch who runs her section of the auto smuggling biz with an iron fist. We'd use the word sassy, but we'd only hate ourselves for it.



JERICHO

The big man. The boss. The killing machine. Cold as a thousand ice shards and twice as sharp, Jericho's the man who puts Tanner out of action. But is it for good? Well, what do you think? Nah.



Busting a rival's lot in a time limit is awesome fun.



You won't find much help from fellow officers undercover.



Creating pileups is why we get up in the morning.

MAKE NO MISTAKE: DRIV3R WANTS YOU TO DRIVE PROPERLY. AND FAST TOO."

TALKING TURKEY

At last, we're off to Istanbul. It's time to tail a rival gangster to his hideout. Players of *Drivers 1* and *2* will remember this kind of stop-start action, which has Tanner staying near enough behind the vehicle without being spotted or losing him. Thankfully, it's just a short ride to the next section, where you must reach the boss by shooting his guards with a silenced pistol. Let them raise the alarm, and it's all over.

Eventually, Tanner's rumbled and very nearly gutted by his erstwhile employers. In a climactic rescue scene, you control Tanner from the back of a truck as he makes his getaway. Ironically, the entire Istanbul constabulary is out to get you, and you have to gun down the cars before they can smash the truck to bits. Cop cars in *Driv3r* are extremely hard to take down, with bulletproof windows and armoured shells, so you'll need a steady hand to get them out of action.

Now that your cover is blown, you're free to go after the real villains. Calita gets away, leading to a bastard-

hard chase to catch her. She's an ace driver, and you're going to need all your skills just to keep up, let alone shoot her down. In a way, it's the purest kind of *Driv3r* mission: just you versus the enemy in a car. Speed and skill are the only things you'll need. Cutting across busy roads and navigating narrow alleys, you'll be hanging on by the skin of your teeth. Then you're up against a truck filled with explosives, racing through the Istanbul streets. Bombs fall off the back, leading to a massive set-piece chase that's simply chock-full of amazing explosions. If you get a bomb under your wheels, you'll go flying spectacularly in the air.

Naturally, these are just the highlights of the 30-plus missions in the game. There's a load more subsidiary characters than we've had time to talk about here, and a lot of other missions in between these ones. And of course, we're not going to tell you all about the very last mission. That would just be going over the top, wouldn't it? C'mon, there's nothing more to see here. Move along!

Still here? Aah, okay. We can't hold anything back

from you, can we? The grand finale sees Tanner chasing a speeding train down the tracks, narrowly avoiding trains in the opposite direction and driving like hell to try and get ahead of it. Although the track itself curves gently, as train tracks do, you'll be travelling at absolute flat out top speed. Even the slightest bump is enough to wreck your vehicle, and it's only with the very last ounce of speed that you'll be able to manage it. Phew!

FIRST OPINIONS

If you've played *Driver* and *Driver 2*, some of these missions will be looking very familiar right around now. *Driv3r* plays and looks like a true sequel to those games, but with a whole bucketload of beautiful PS2 gorgeousness thrown over it. The emphasis is on perfect driving, with no faults tolerated, and you'll find yourself playing missions over again and again just to get it right. But then, this is *Driv3r*. And we really wouldn't have it any other way.

/ JOFF BROWN

**'MY BOYFRIEND HITS ME,
THEN HE SAYS HE LOVES ME,
AND RECKONS IT'S ALL OK.'**

NO, IT'S A CRIME.

Violence and assault against women is always unacceptable and, of course, most men understand that. Sometimes this behaviour is criminal and should be reported immediately.

Women who have suffered it should never feel it's their fault. Instead they should seek help and advice. It could be from friends or parents, or it could be by talking to an experienced counsellor on the new Confidential Helpline. You can also visit our website, www.australiasaysno.gov.au

Violence against women is a serious social problem. It will only stop if everybody in Australia says No.



VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

AUSTRALIA SAYS NO

Confidential Helpline

1800 200 526

REVIEWS

Attention! This section contains everything you need to decide what to buy, and what to leave alone.



54 PANDORA TOMORROW
Sam Fisher returns, shoots some nasty terrorists and shows off his gadgets. Lovely stuff.

PSW RATINGS

The PSW scoring system is designed to make your buying decisions simple. Here's how it works.

> 10/10	ESSENTIAL
> 9/10	BRILLIANT
> 8/10	RECOMMENDED
> 7/10	GREAT
> 6/10	DECENT
> 5/10	AVERAGE
> 4/10	POOR
> 3/10	VERY DISAPPOINTING
> 2/10	BLOODY RUBBISH
> 1/10	AVOID AT ALL COSTS

IF YOU'D TOLD US A COUPLE OF YEARS AGO

that one of the best adventures on PS2 would take place in feudal Japan, but would somehow feature gun-wielding French actor Jean Reno, time travel and giant dinosaur-style demons, we would have laughed. But it's true. *Onimusha 3* takes the series to an all-time high and, if you haven't been enticed before, one glance at our frothing-at-the-mouth review should convince you that explosive samurai butchery is very much the genre to be seen playing this particular season on PlayStation2.

Well, if you're not already playing super-spy in *Splinter Cell: Pandora Tomorrow*. Although he hasn't quite got there yet, Sam Fisher is well on the way to establishing himself as the pre-eminent stealth-action hero on PS2. Did you hear that, Snake? Yes? Well, You best get moving on *MGS3* then, don't you think?

Back on the demon killing front, more monsters were put to death in *Van Helsing*, which shocked us, but only by being a surprisingly good film license. The timely *UEFA Euro 2004* confirms that EA's money-spinning footy games still lag way behind the rest of their sports titles in quality terms, and *Legends of Wrestling: Showdown* proves that sometimes you just shouldn't teach an old dog new tricks.

/ DANIEL STAINES



PSW GAME OF THE MONTH

The Game of the Month Award is what it is, the title that in PSW's opinion is the essential purchase of the month. Go and buy it. Now. Now!



PSW MUST BUY

Typically awarded to games that score 8/10 or above, representing one of the best in its genre. Simply, if you like this type of game, you 'must buy'. Clever eh?



070 Van Helsing



066 LOW: Showdown

NEW RELEASES

It's all here this month. We've got killer reviews of *Pandora Tomorrow*, *Onimusha 3*, *Smash Court Tennis* and *Van Helsing*. Not quite so sure about *Legends of Wrestling: Showdown* though...

054	SPLINTER CELL: PANDORA TOMORROW
060	ONIMUSHA 3: DEMON SIEGE
066	LEGENDS OF WRESTLING: SHOWDOWN
070	VAN Helsing
072	SMASH COURT TENNIS PRO TOURNAMENT 2
074	SINGSTAR
076	UEFA EURO 2004
078	KARAOKE STAGE
080	SERIOUS SAM
082	MINI-REVIEWS
083	MINI-REVIEWS





SPLINTER CELL: PANDORA TOMORROW

THE STEALTH MASTERPIECE GOES ONLINE AT LAST... BUT IS IT ENOUGH TO MAKE IT A MUST-BUY SEQUEL?

> TYPE	STEALTH
> PLAYERS	1-4
> OUT	JUNE
> PUBLISHER	UBISOFT
> DEVELOPER	UBISOFT
> ONLINE	YES



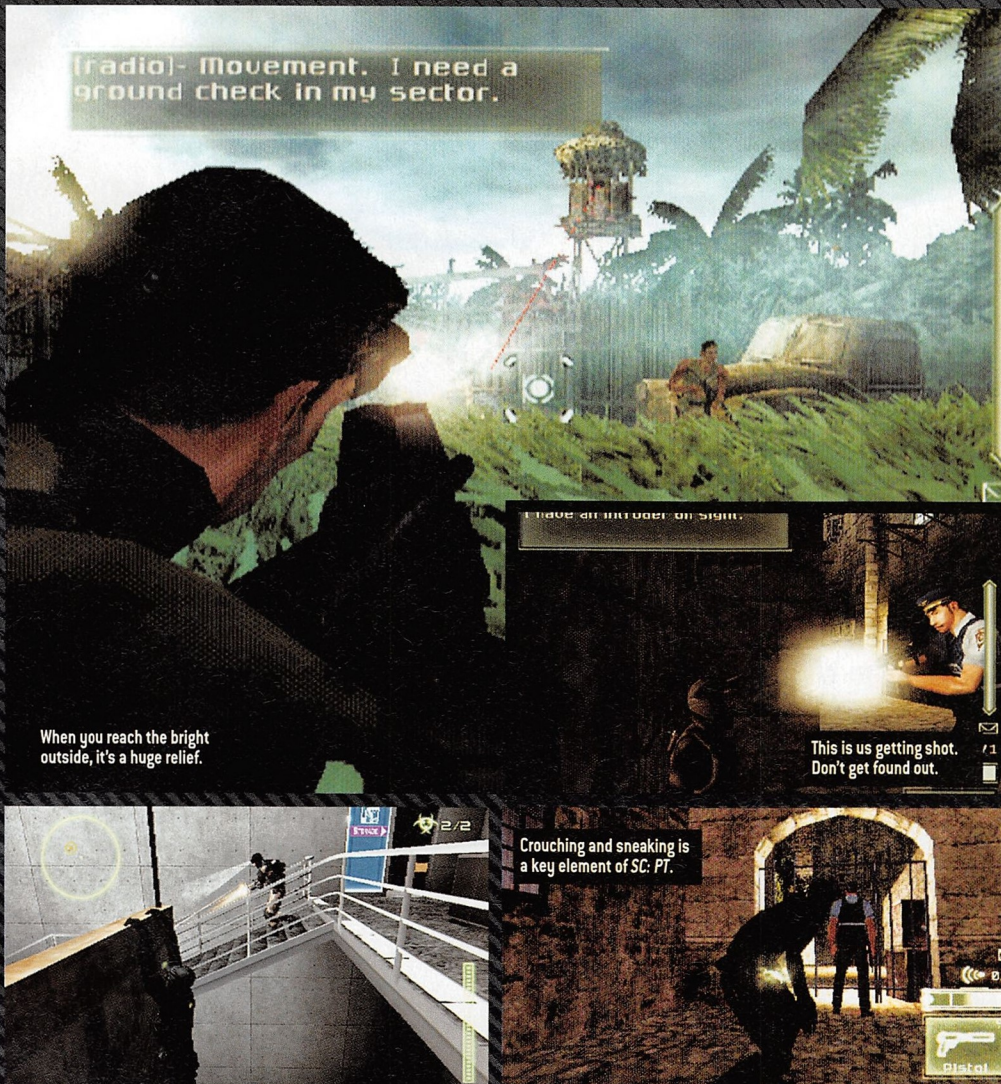
Whilst other so-called action heroes tend to fart about when they're on duty (we can just see Solid Snake fending off telemarketing calls on his Codec whilst squatting inside a cardboard box, or James Bond hunting for a condom vending machine in the toilets of a Russian missile silo), *Splinter Cell's* Sam Fisher just gets on with the job. No ifs, nor buts, just a cold and calculated squeeze of the trigger. He really is the ultimate man of action. In fact, he is quite simply "the man". If you hadn't already discovered this fact by playing the original *Splinter Cell*, then *Pandora Tomorrow* gives you a second chance to find out

what's so fabulous about Mr. Fisher. Strap on some goggles (heck, swimming goggles will do – don't worry, no one will see you when the lights are off) and join us on a working holiday in East Timor.

The observant gamers amongst us will have noticed that stealth gaming is as much about inaction as it is about action. The aim is usually to avoid interaction with the artificial intelligence at all costs. So how is this fun? If you're going to spend a large portion of the game time crouching behind crates or waiting in the shadows, then it helps if the player still has something to do – or

at least think about. In *Splinter Cell*, it's Sam Fisher's amazing array of spy gadgets that help enliven the sometimes slow pace of the stealth play. Whilst you're lingering in the shadows, you can start browsing through your tools and decide how to get past your current obstacle, be it a stationed guard or a roving security camera.

Let's say it's a security camera. Sam could lean out from the corner and use his fancy new pistol with laser-sight to pop its lens, use his camera jammer to momentarily fry its circuitry allowing him to waltz on by, or perform a bit acrobatics to avoid the camera's "cone of sight".



The real fun lies in experimenting with each technique to see what happens – even if it means reloading your game. The beauty is in the choice that the player has to express themselves to overcome the problem. It's true that many games provide the illusion of choice but don't actually allow you to fool about and experiment with the game world. The *Splinter Cell* games do allow you that freedom, which is what makes its spy antics so enjoyable, and Sam Fisher such a cool character. He's as versatile as you want him to be.

The only caveat is that this player freedom takes place within a very linear context. Missions invariably involve tackling objectives in the order that the game prescribes, with each small location functioning like a discrete puzzle. You can solve that puzzle in any way you see fit, but you must solve it in order to continue on into the next room or game area. You're stuck until you crack it. Thus, the game plays out in a typical linear fashion – which is required in

terms of how *Pandora Tomorrow's* story has been scripted. We can live with it, though, because *Splinter Cell* is just so darn well designed that you'll always come back to it for another go. When you do succeed to get through a particularly tricky sequence, you can't help but feel really satisfied. *Pandora Tomorrow*, just like its predecessor, is slick, quality gaming.

SHIT + FAN = SAM

The story to this sequel goes like this: The year is 2006. The U.S. has installed a temporary military base (well, they say it's temporary, as they always do...) in East Timor to help train its defence force whilst allowing themselves quick access to East Timor's more problematic neighbours. Naturally, the resentment against the U.S. military presence has continued to grow to the point where the shit is obviously going to hit the fan. Indonesian militia, under the guiding hand of one heck of a bad guy named Suhadi Sadono, attack and occupy the U.S. embassy in Jakarta, taking a bunch of innocent people hostage. This is where you (and Sam) step in.

After the game's amazingly cinematic intro (it really is quite special – character models are starting to look frighteningly realistic these days), you find yourself tasked with infiltrating the embassy to help rescue the hostages and secure important information. It's typical Clancy polit-bollocks, yes, but what else would you expect?

If you have never played *Splinter Cell* before then you'll find the brief tutorial in this first



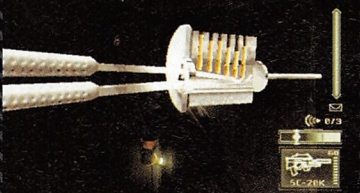
NEW MOVES!

See what skills Sam's been learning during his gap year.



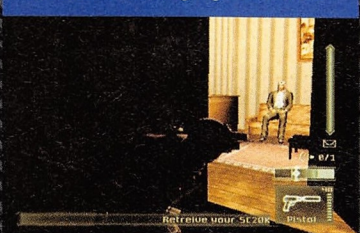
DOUBLE JUMP

A double jump? Like some cartoon idiot from a platform game? Pressing Triangle makes Sam jump and brace between two walls – pressing it again makes him leap up and go higher. Like Mickey Mouse. It's an outrage.



LOCK PICK

The left analogue stick controls the pick, and it's your job to wiggle it around until the lock chamber jiggles. Then you wiggle it loads in the key area and *viola* – an open door. Praise God there are no bloody key cards to find.

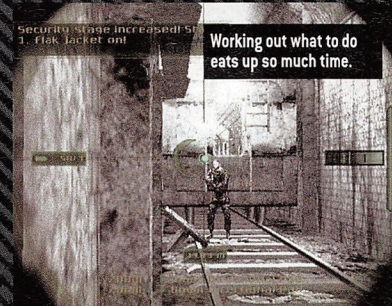
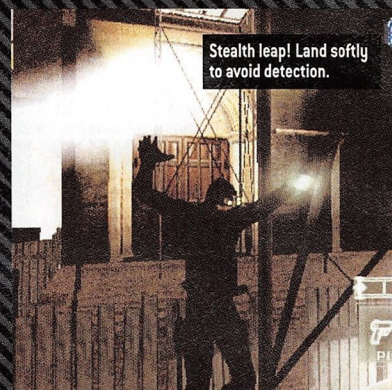


SWAT ROLL

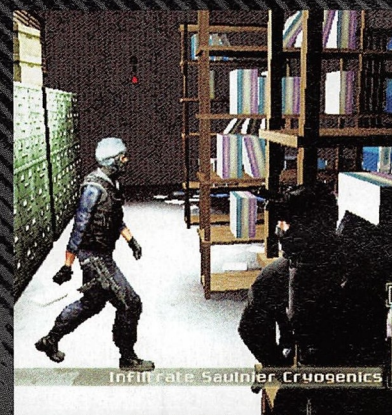
Clicking the left stick makes Sam brace with his back against the wall. Moving the stick makes him peek around the corner – now press the X button and Sam leaps, rolls and pops up on the other side of the door.

mission quite handy. However, it's not the greatest tutorial in the world, and does assume you already know the basics of controlling Sam Fisher and how the game mechanics operate. With a bit of fumbling about, you'll start to get the hang of it, but we do think it's strange that if a tutorial is going to be included at all, that it doesn't assume the player is a complete newbie. The result is a bit of a half-arsed lesson in *Splinter Cell* gameplay that concentrates on showing off the new moves Sam has learned for his first sequel. While the rest of us will cruise through knowing exactly what to do – hungry to just get on with the real game – first timers will probably struggle a bit and need to look up the game manual. The game manual! It's almost unheard of.

So what new techniques has Sam learned lately? For starters, there's the SWAT roll. This cool looking move allows you to flip past an open doorway in the blink of an eye to give you



Hours of fun to be had making fools out of the terrorists.



Wait, follow, murder violently from behind.

a better angle for sussing out the situation in the room beyond... or to simply continue on your way without alerting anyone to your presence. Sam has also been keeping up with his after-hours ballet lessons, because he has a new split jump move. Whilst suspended between two walls, Sam can now spring upwards and catapult himself to an upper ledge through the sheer power of his leg muscles, provided he's in a narrow enough space. Then there's his funky new trap-door hang. Sam can suspend himself in an open trap door and pull himself back up to safety if he decides not to drop down. There's nothing terribly exciting about Sam's new abilities, but it does just add that little bit more depth to the controls – if you can remember to use them at the time. *Splinter Cell* fans will also notice that Sam's full repertoire of moves have in general been tweaked slightly for an all round smoother gameplay experience. Silently grabbing guards from behind feels more reliable, for instance. However, physical prowess isn't the only area where our superspy has improved this time around.

INSPECTOR GADGET

The gadgets were the real supporting cast in the hit that was *Splinter Cell*, so it's nice to see a few more goodies added to the mix. The multipurpose rifle has returned and allows players to access a variety of functions with a

"THE REAL FUN LIES IN EXPERIMENTING WITH EACH TECHNIQUE TO SEE WHAT HAPPENS."

simple press of the D-pad. And as I mentioned earlier, targeting with both this and the pistol has been made easier with the addition of an optional laser-marker. Now you can target small light bulbs with ease, but beware if you flash it at an enemy guard – the laser marker is easy for them to notice (much like it is when someone flashes a laser pointer in your face at the movie cinema) and unless you're ruthlessly quick, they'll be straight onto the radio and calling for backup.

Another welcome new element to the gameplay that'll really keep you on edge is the three-stage alarm system. In effect, it allows you to screw up your attempts at stealth three times during a mission before it's declared a failure. For instance, when you're required to remain undetected, not hiding a guard's dead body can subsequently result in the alarm level being raised. After receiving a warning – and an earbashing for doing something wrong – you really have to start being more observant and careful for fear of alerting the whole compound to your presence. A guard that notices you and

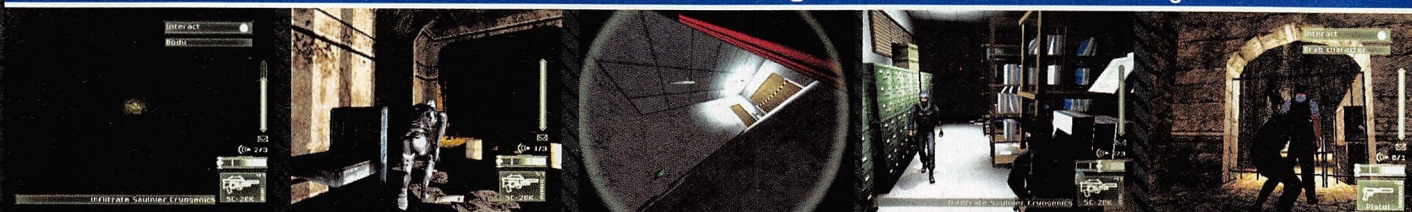
radios for help, for instance, will also knock the alarm stage up another notch. Three strikes and you're out. If you stay undetected for long enough, the alarm level will drop back down again, so it is possible to avoid copping all three strikes just before completing your objectives. This three-tiered system does add a cool element to the game because it's no longer suddenly game over if you get discovered during some missions. It helps to free up the trial and error style of play so prevalent in the original *Splinter Cell*, although there's still plenty of loading and reloading of your last checkpoint when things don't turn out the way you expected. At least now you can continue on and see if you can get through without triggering that final level of alarm.

SPY VS. MERC

If you mastered the original *Splinter Cell*, then you may feel slightly disappointed that *Pandora Tomorrow*'s single player component isn't really all that different to what you experienced in the original. This isn't the kind of sequel that takes you on a wild new gameplay experience, but instead is very much just a honing and toning of the gameplay established in its predecessor. Sure, it's fun to crouch in the weeds of an Indonesian jungle instead of hiding behind office partitions again, but the gameplay is essentially the same. If it weren't a console release, you

THE HIGHS AND LOWS OF SPLINTER CELL

How *Pandora Tomorrow* delights and then confounds at every turn.



DARK LEVELS

GOOD BECAUSE It certainly raises the tension when you're trying to work out if that shape in the distance is a man with a gun or just an innocent tree.

BAD BECAUSE Not being able to see doors because it's too dark isn't much of a help, nor is having to turn the brightness on your TV up as far as it goes to play it.

SNEAKING

GOOD BECAUSE The game reveals its plot to you through conversations you hear – sitting outside a window as Osama spills the beans feels super-cool.

BAD BECAUSE Accidentally standing up or rolling in front of enemies is very easy to do, resulting in immediate death and you having to start it all again.

SPYING

GOOD BECAUSE Making you plan so thoroughly about which way to go draws you into the experience so much than if you just blundered through.

BAD BECAUSE Sometimes a man needs to just let rip, you know? Scoping out level after level in painstaking detail can feel like more of a chore than a gaming pleasure.

HIDING

GOOD BECAUSE Lying in wait, crouching unseen in the dark, biding your time until a terrorist's throat is within reach is another textbook *Splinter Cell* moment.

BAD BECAUSE It can be a drawn out process. Some enemies walk around on huge loops – miss your shot and there's often a long wait for them to come back into range.

MUGGING

GOOD BECAUSE Tip-toeing behind guards and clubbing them over the head is a great laugh, one at the very core of the *Splinter Cell* experience.

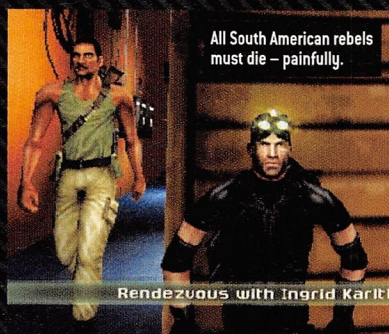
BAD BECAUSE One mistake, one tiny little error in your positioning and you're dead in a flash. Plus the guards are way too quick to react to your presence.



"THE SWAT ROLL ALLOWS YOU TO FLIP PAST AN OPEN DOORWAY IN THE BLINK OF AN EYE."

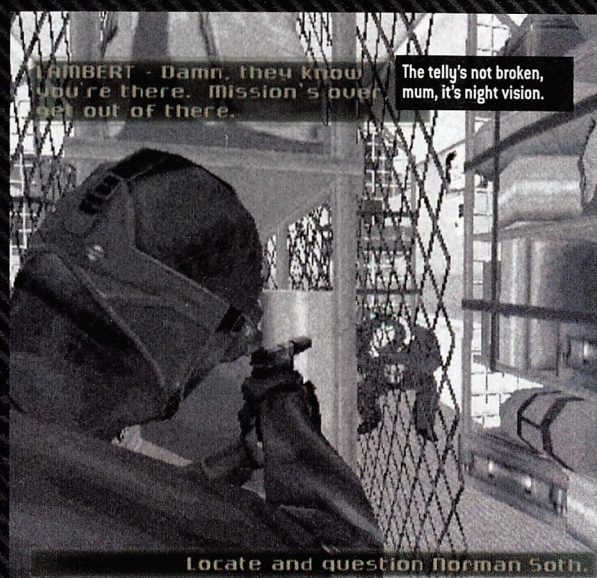
could almost look upon *Pandora Tomorrow* as an expansion pack with a new campaign to play through – with a few of those new features that we mentioned earlier. But before you start to put your wallet back into your trousers (or your purse back into your handbag for that matter), there's one very major feature in *Pandora Tomorrow* that just might convince you it's a must-have game for your PS2 collection. That, my friends, is a slammin' multiplayer mode.

At first you might imagine a whole bunch of Sam Fisher clones running about a level shooting at each other in a frantic display of tired old deathmatching, but you would be quite wrong indeed. The *Splinter Cell* multiplayer experience has been specially designed to offer something that is both fresh and yet still an experience very much in the style of the game's stealth action gameplay. Team play is at the



heart of the multiplayer mode, with two teams of two taking each other on via PS2 system link or online. Yes, you really do need three other people in order to enjoy it, but hopefully that shouldn't be a problem when connected with broadband and the Network Entertainment Adaptor.

The idea is that one team plays the Argus Mercenaries (the "bad guys" you could say) whilst the other two are the Sam Fisher-esque Shadownet agents. The Shadownet agents have non-lethal tools at their disposal only, so no guns for you. That's okay though, because you're the master of hand-to-hand combat (allowing you to grab a Mercenary much the way Sam takes out unsuspecting guards with an arm around the neck), you are almost invisible in the dark, and have a thermal vision headset as well as nightvision goggles. You also have smoke, chaff and flashbang grenades, a noise emitter, sticky camera, sticky shocker and spy bullet (which will mark an enemy on your radar for your teammate). Over the three different game types, it's your priority to go undetected by the Mercs and achieve whatever



objectives the game type determines.

Mercs, on the other hand, are fully equipped for dealing out death. You'll get armour, a powerful rifle with a variety of firing modes, flares for lighting up dark areas, mines, a spy trap, a tazer, and some grenades – all for flushing out and killing those annoying agents. It is the Mercs objective to sniff out the agents and stop them from completing their sneaky objectives. The really big difference with the Mercs, however, is that you play in first-person. This makes complete sense, as otherwise you'd be able to see the agents every time they try to creep up behind you. Play as the Mercs and you'll finally know what it feels like to be one of Sam Fisher's hapless victims!

Game modes include Neutralisation, Extraction and Sabotage, which will all be fairly familiar to anyone who's played *Counter-Strike*, as they're similar in many respects to the terrorist and counter-terrorist activities in that PC mod. With the use of the PS2 headset and voice communication, true teamwork is possible by two players who have a good knowledge of their equipment and are willing to work together. If you don't already have buddies to play with, it might be hard to find other players of a similar skill level to yourself, but once you do, it must



Can he see us? If he can we're dead. Fingers crossed.



The train level is, as far as train levels go, very good indeed.

ONLINE MULTI-PLAYER IS GO!

The real reason to buy *Pandora Tomorrow* is its superb Spies vs Mercenaries online stealth option – here's why it rocks.

For up to four people on a two-on-two basis, *Pandora Tomorrow* offers an all-new spin on online gaming. You're either a spy, like the hero of the single-player game, or a mercenary – a guard with a gun – in a game that challenges your stealth instincts and offers a stealth-war experience like nothing else.

SPIES VS MERCENARIES

Playing as a mercenary means you're out to hunt down the stealthy spies. To hinder you slightly the game switches to a first person viewpoint, with players seeing the game through the eyes of the man they control, *Rainbow Six 3* style. You can't see what's behind you and have a much more limited range of moves to play with – and are therefore vulnerable.

The spies keep the traditional *Splinter Cell* viewpoint, giving a much wider scope for seeing what's going on around you. With the mercs' view hampered so much, it's possible for spies to tail them and follow them around for ages, having a huge amount of fun watching their online mates fruitlessly searching for their target.

Spies don't have guns, instead coming equipped with stun weapons, smoke grenades and audio traps designed to create diversions elsewhere and lure the guard into dark corners – and death. The spy 'wins' a game by

locating and holding a key area or device for a set amount of time, the merc wins by gunning the spy down or keeping the location secure.

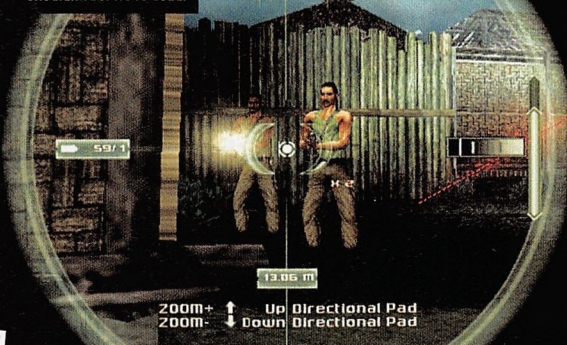
NOW I HAVE A MACHINE GUN. HO. HO. HO. Mercenaries do have guns. They also have torches and flares, handy for eliminating the shadows spies love hiding in so much. What they don't have is night or thermal vision, which have been replaced by a new motion detector device – handy if your target is moving, but not so much use if they're right behind you with a fist travelling rapidly towards your windpipe.

In conjunction with what we said in the review, we should now have formed in your mind a good idea of just how brilliant *Pandora Tomorrow* is to play online. A fantastic way of getting stealth gaming to work on a multiplayer basis, there really is no better online game available for PlayStation2 today. If you're looking for a reason to splurge on broadband and a Network Adaptor, this is it. It makes *SOCOM* look like the work of untrained idiots.

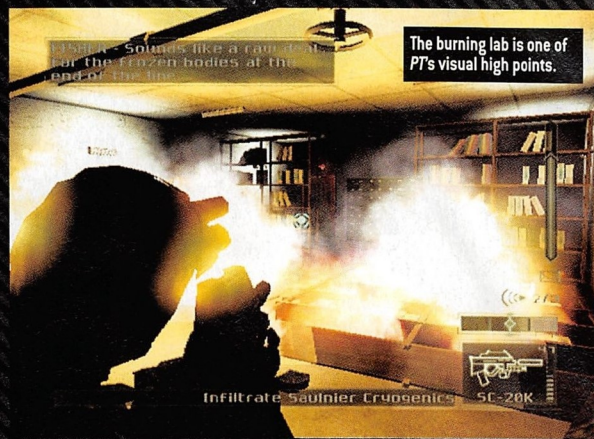
Zip lines galore link levels in dramatic style.



They're shooting. They shouldn't be. We're dead.



The burning lab is one of PT's visual high points.



Infiltrate Saulnier Cryogenics 5C-20K

I'm stealthing in the rain... just stealthing in the rain...



"PLAY AS THE MERCS AND YOU'LL FINALLY KNOW WHAT IT FEELS LIKE TO BE ONE OF SAM FISHER'S HAPLESS VICTIMS!"

be said that *Pandora Tomorrow*'s multiplayer is quite a challenging and rewarding experience. Let's hope that this concept is fully expanded on in future *Splinter Cell* games, because there's amazing potential here for a standalone multiplayer title in this Mercs versus Agents concept alone. It certainly makes *Pandora Tomorrow* well worth the price of admission for anyone who enjoys getting online with their PS2.

PURELY COSMETIC

Visually, *Splinter Cell: Pandora Tomorrow* is once again a veritable feast for the eyes. From the amazing water effects to the gorgeous jungle areas, it's very easy to be fully drawn into the game world and forget the dreary living room around you. For those of you who worry about what the other consoles are getting and whether the PS2 matches up, then we must admit, *Pandora Tomorrow* on PS2 is not quite as graphically pretty as it is on other platforms. However, it's a lot prettier than the first PS2 *Splinter Cell*, so that's reason enough for celebration. Just be prepared to feel a little jealous when your friend who has the Xbox or PC version shows you how much better the textures and cool shadow effects are in their versions.

Some corners obviously had to be cut to get this game to run properly on the PS2, and some of the finer details have been lost. The good thing is that most of you probably won't care, or even be able to tell the difference, because the changes are for the most part purely cosmetic. There are no real differences between the versions of *Splinter Cell* out there in terms of gameplay (well, okay, the PS2 version has slightly re-designed levels) so the experience

will be much the same for Sam Fisher fans everywhere across the gaming landscape. What PS2 owners do get that the other versions don't is stats and scoring at the completion of each level so you can see just how stealthy or aggressive you were in meeting your objectives. There's also a pretty cool bomb diffusal tool that works much like lockpicking, making the game a lot tenser than just pushing an action button in the menu.

When you've run *Pandora Tomorrow* into the ground and don't think there's any more goodness to squeeze from it, just remember that the *Splinter Cell* series looks set to continue its winning streak with the newly announced *Splinter Cell 3*. But lets save that for another time, shall we?

/ Eliot Fish

PS2 VERDICT

UPPERS	DOWNERS
> Fun stealth/puzzle action	> Lots of loading screens
> Pretty to look at	> Awful camera glitches
> Top multiplayer fun	> Similar to the first game
> Lots of lengthy missions	> Trial and error play can frustrate

GRAPHICS	> It may not look as incredible as it does on other gaming platforms, but this is still one of the prettiest PS2 games around.	9
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SOUNDS	> Brilliant voice acting really brings the characters to life, and all those sound effects are just super cool.	9
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LIFESPAN	> The single player game is easily finished, but the multiplayer should keep you happy for some time.	7
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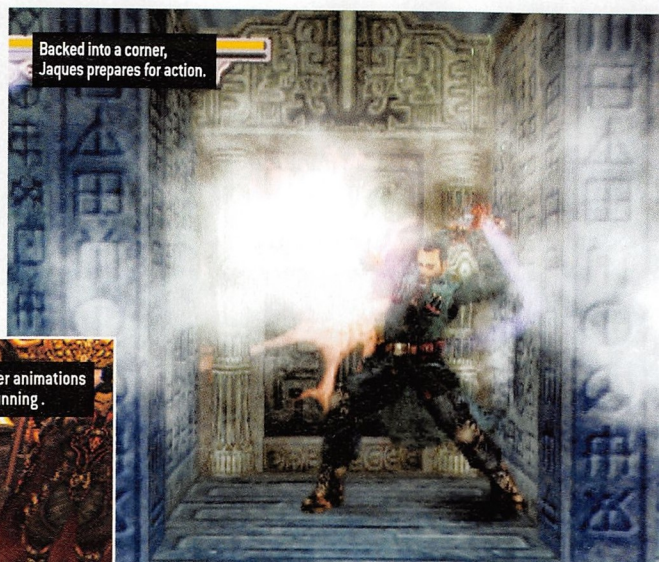
OVERALL SCORE	Although it's not quite as good as <i>Animusha 3</i> , we're still giving it game of the month simply because of the gorgeous multiplayer component. Yes, it really is that good. Really.	8
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A blast in the face makes you take him seriously.



Jacques' chain whip is his first power-up weapon.



Backed into a corner, Jacques prepares for action.



The character animations are truly stunning.



A nifty bit of Harley stuntwork from Jacques.

ONIMUSHA 3



> TYPE	ACTION ADVENTURE
> PLAYERS	1
> OUT	JULY
> PUBLISHER	CAPCOM
> DEVELOPER	CAPCOM
> ONLINE	NO

We laugh in the face of demons, we do. Time-travelling, Frenchman-killing, robot demons, though – that's a bit more serious. *Onimusha 3* ain't messing around...

SO, CAPCOM'S GREAT ADVENTURE FINALLY reaches its climax. The bad news is that *Onimusha 3* is the last game in the series – samurai swordsman Samanosuke can finally hang up his katana once this adventure is complete, much to the abject disappointment of devout gamers across the globe. However, the good news is that the series doesn't so much end with a bang as with a nuclear explosion of gaming brilliance. Capcom has pulled out all the stops (and indeed anything else that needs

pulling out) to make this one of the best action adventure titles you can get on PS2, or indeed any other machine for that matter.

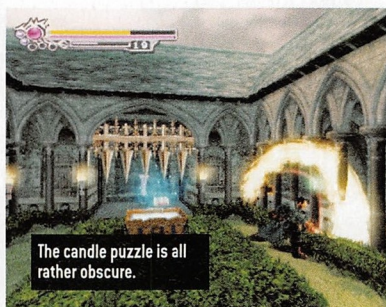
The secret behind *Onimusha 3*'s brilliance is fairly straightforward; it takes on board a little bit of everything that's good from all the best games in the action adventure genre, and then injects them with an *Onimusha* flavour. As we played our way through to the end we were constantly being surprised at just how much Capcom had borrowed or stolen from other games. But, far

from being just a hotch-potch of generic action adventure clichés, these elements have been combined to make a game with a unique feel – a game that none of its immediate competitors can hope to match. More specifically, while *Onimusha 3* boasts the graphical prowess and rampant playability of *Devil May Cry*, it's got more shocks and starts than *Resident Evil*, and the weaponry and power-ups effortlessly outdo anything found in *Castlevania*.

But despite its many borrowings, *Onimusha 3* never betrays its roots. Okay, so the super-high resolution 2D backgrounds of the last two games have been replaced with a slightly rougher-looking 3D environment, but the rich attention to detail is still there, and more than that, the quality gameplay that is synonymous with *Onimusha* is present in every level, in every puzzle, in every sub-game and in every boss confrontation. You can look at the screenshots on this review and be astounded by what Capcom has achieved from a visual perspective, but it's only when you play the game that you'll appreciate just how good it actually is.



When large enemies crop up, try a super-move.



The candle puzzle is all rather obscure.





Jacques uses a machine gun for defence.



Carving a path through the enemy legions.



Jacques wields his mace against this boss.



Enemy demons get special attacks too.



Michelle gets in on the demon slaying action.

THE STORY SO FAR

Onimusha 3 kicks off with a six minute cut-scene that, according to Capcom, took the artists over a year to complete. It's the only movie in the entire game, and it does a superb job of setting the scene.

It seems like Ancient Japan's favourite bogeyman, Nobunaga, has finally realised the potential of the time-travelling sorcery at his disposal. He's decided to stop his medieval mucking about, and set his sights on a far more ambitious scheme. Taking a leaf out of Adolf Hitler's book, he's decided to occupy present day France, using his foul magic to transport an entire invasion force of the toughest and nastiest demons. As the opening cut-scene shows, the result is a full-scale bloodbath as Paris is ransacked within minutes. Or to put it another way: Japanese Demon Overlord 1, Cheese-Eating Surrender Monkeys 0.

The bad news for Nobunaga is that there is one man in France [just one, mind] who isn't having any of this invasion nonsense. That man is the not-at-all stereotyped French hero, Jacques Blanc, who's ably played by a digital version of Hollywood legend, Jean Reno.

Jacques is just your everyday Frenchman really – a grenade-lobbing, Harley Davidson-riding action hero whose sub-machine gun makes mincemeat of the demonic hordes.

The bad news for France is that very early on in the game, Jacques is caught up in a bizarre time-war and ends up back in Ancient Japan – where ammunition for his modern weaponry is somewhat lacking.

At the same time, in a hugely bizarre twist of

HEROES ONE AND ALL

These three people will save the world!



SAMANOSUKE

WHO IS HE? Arch-nemesis of the evil, twisted Nobunaga, this guy is the toughest samurai in the world ever, and the main hero of *Onimusha 3*.

WHAT DOES HE DO? He starts the game finishing off Nobunaga's demonic hordes, but is soon warped forward to present-day France in order to finish off the boss.

WEAPONRY? You name it – Samanosuke wields several types of sword, katana and axe, each of which is imbued with a special attack for extra damage.



JACQUES BLANC

WHO IS HE? Er, Jean Reno? Jacques is a no-nonsense action hero, mean wielder of all types of automatic weaponry, rider of expensive bikes and... erm, single father.

WHAT DOES HE DO? While Samanosuke replaces him in France, Jacques is transported to 16th century Japan where he must learn how to fight without guns.

WEAPONRY? Plasma whips, a stonking great mace and spears – you name it. Also has grappling capabilities to jump across chasms and scale buildings.



MICHELLE

WHO IS SHE? Why, *Onimusha 3*'s token female of course! She's a dangerous French madame who's armed to the teeth and out to kick some butt.

WHAT DOES SHE DO? She seems to be relaxing in Jacques' apartment, looking after his son. But when she's needed for rescue duties, she's more than ready.

WEAPONRY? A *Resident Evil* style shotgun and a fistful of hand grenades, but there's a sniper rifle of sorts to be located in the zoo area of the game too.

fate, the original *Onimusha* hero, Samanosuke, is finally closing in on Nobunaga back in Japan. It's the final battle and the evil one is losing. But of course, before Samanosuke can deliver a fatal blow Nobunaga miraculously escapes through the medium of time travel, propelling himself into modern day France, while somehow dragging Jacques back to Ancient Japan. As Jacques arrives, Samanosuke is mysteriously warped to present day France. How will the

heroes cope with their new situations? How on earth can they team-up across the time zones to defeat a diabolical scheme of this magnitude? As the annoyingly wussy voiceover man from *Big Brother* might say, "You decide..."

THE NEW TIME TEAM

It sounds like a recipe for a hugely disjointed gameplay experience as the story unfolds, with players taking control of both Jacques



Sam finds himself on the receiving end for once.



Sam must tread carefully in the boss demon's lair.



A demonic canine gets both barrels from 'Chelle.



Sam gets on the wrong side of yet another demon.

and Samanosuke, swapping between them as the story unfolds. One moment you're in France with the samurai, then without much warning, your thrust back into feudal Japan with Jacques as he comes to terms with a life where machine guns are as useless as the empty ammunition magazines attached to them.

Capcom's stroke of genius is to introduce a lovable yet irritating sidekick that follows you everywhere and has the supremely useful ability to travel between the two time zones. Her name is Ako, and she's best described as an even-smaller, pixie-sized Asian version of Kylie Minogue with wings. Being so small, she's not much use in a fight, but she can zoom about

and collect items in hard-to-reach places. More importantly, she's responsible for moving the plot along, making the swap between the two heroes seamless and believable.

What could have been a clumsy, irritating and over-complicated idea is actually one of this game's greatest strengths. To begin with, Jacques and Samanosuke seem to be on two

entirely separate journeys. But as the game progresses, their quests begin to noticeably interlock. By the halfway stage, they're actually in the same geographical area, just in different time zones.

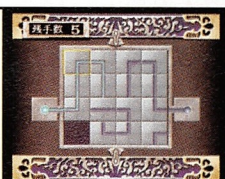
This is where things really start to get interesting. Through a series of mystical portals, players are able to switch from one time period to the other and one character to another. By using Ako you can also swap items between Jacques and Samanosuke. This paves the way for all manner of brilliant, brain-busting time-based puzzles. For example, on one particular level Samanosuke needs to climb down the side of a sheer castle wall. The solution for this puzzle is [SPOILER ALERT #1] for Jacques to plant a tree at the bottom of the wall during the 16th century. A quick warp back to the present day finds a fully-grown tree there for the samurai to make use of!

Another level sees both of our heroes trapped in an underground temple. Three doors are locked and Samanosuke only has a key for one of them, which leads to a flooded chamber. This insanely simple set-up paves the way for one of the most complex puzzles in the game, as [SPOILER ALERT #2] the key must be warped back to Jacques, who can then open up other

BRAIN-BUSTERS OLD AND NEW

Onimusha 3 includes some classic puzzling too!

In addition to the insanely fast combat sections and brilliant adventuring, *Onimusha 3* contains a fair number of time-warping mini-puzzles and brain-ticklers for you to get the old grey matter into gear with. Some of them are lifted straight out of previous installments from the *Onimusha* saga, but most of them are all-new and constructed around the time-travel theme.



SLIDE PUZZLES

This should be familiar to seasoned *Onimusha* gamers – slide the blocks around to create a clear flow of energy from one side of the puzzle to the other. You must complete it in a set number of moves.



BY THE BOOK

This door-lock puzzle is found in the underwater temple. Each book in the case has a different number on the spine. Tally up the numbers to create a sum that gives you a result of 22 and you may progress.



SUN, MOON AND STARS

This one is more of a reaction test for Jacques. There's a strong clue that tells you the order in which to move across the board. To unlock the next part of the level you must follow these orders quickly.

LOOKING FOR A BIT ON THE SIDE?

Onimusha 3 packs in the added extras, sardine-style.



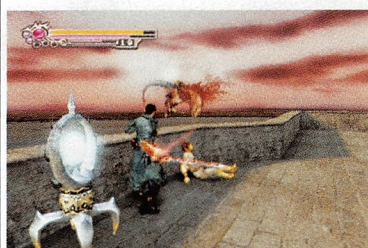
THE PHANTOM ZONE

Every so often you're accosted by a bizarre troll-like figure who dangles from the ceiling and beckons you to enter a deadly realm in order to do combat with specially trained demons. You're free to decline his invitation, but taking him up on his deadly offer will reward you with rare and powerful items.



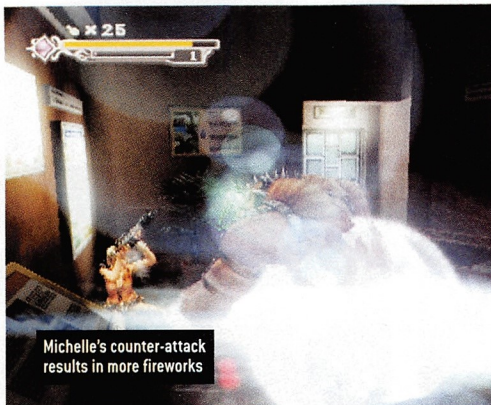
SPECIAL TRAINING

Every time you reach a save point in the game, you're given several options. In addition to saving off your progress to a memory card, you can also indulge in a spot of training. You're given a set task to achieve for which you're rewarded with bonus health and secret items that could prove useful.



SIDE-QUESTS

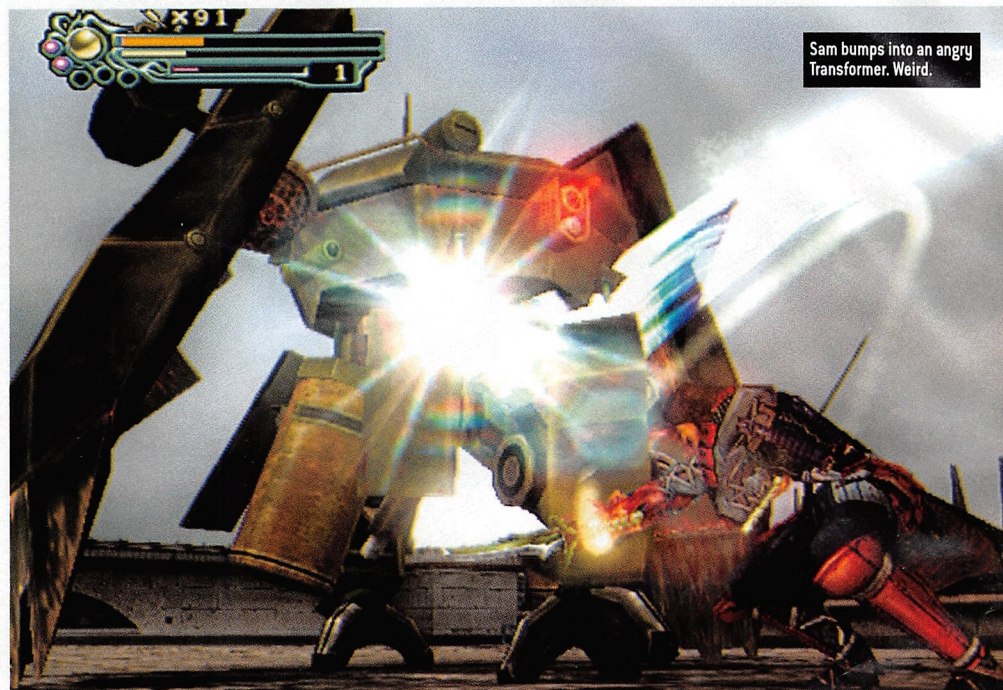
As you travel through the game, you'll notice that there's a lot more going on than just the battle against Nobunaga. Helping normal people find lost objects, bartering with them and saving them from the hellions always reaps rewards. The more time you spend with average Joes, the more bonuses you'll nab.



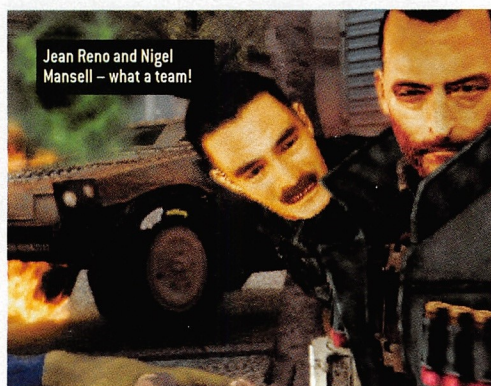
Michelle's counter-attack results in more fireworks



The lightning effects are impressive to behold.



Sam bumps into an angry Transformer. Weird.



Jean Reno and Nigel Mansell – what a team!



Super-moves cause rampant destruction.

alongside the constant presence of Ako, makes sure that things don't get too confusing from a story-telling point of view – just don't expect the game to make things easy when it comes to the time travel puzzles.

TWO MEN AND A LITTLE LADY

This isn't the first time Capcom has experimented with the idea of having different characters to control. To tell the truth though, previous attempts have always left us with the feeling that there's very little to differentiate playable characters aside from different weapons and attack techniques. This means that all too often you're left wondering why they bothered having another character at all.

It's testament to the skill of the *Onimusha 3* development team that you never get that feeling here. A lot of this is down to the plot – the idea of two time-displaced heroes coming up good despite the crushing odds. There's also an

“THE *ONIMUSHA* SERIES DOESN'T SO MUCH END WITH A BANG AS WITH A NUCLEAR EXPLOSION OF GAMING BRILLIANCE.”

excellent feeling that these are fully rounded characters, not just shallow video game heroes. Samanosuke has the *Onimusha* heritage behind him, and the amount of supporting characters and backstory created for Jacques (along with the fact that he wears the face of Jean Reno) helps to make him a believable character too.

Added into the mix is a third playable character – Michelle. She's a colleague of Jacques, and comes armed with grenades, a shotgun and a sniper rifle – if you can find it. Of the three, Michelle is mostly seen in the cut-scenes, and seems to spend most of her time looking after Jacques' son, who seems to have a strong psychic connection with his

areas of the map in the past, finding new keys which must be sent back to the present day. In turn these take you to areas that contain items which are needed for Jacques back in the 16th century! Complicated it may be, but it works.

In another mind-boggling example of the game's time travel aspect, it transpires that Jacques was sent back in time around 10 years before Samanosuke warped to the present day. This means that in one part of *Onimusha 3*, Jacques meets up with a younger version of the samurai master, and does battle by his side. Thankfully though, the way the story is crafted,



A change of tactics is required for this ogre



A powered-up Jacques blasts this boss-dog.



Michelle prefers to use her shotgun against demons.



One super-move and the room will be clear.



Sam vainly tries to escape as the creature strikes



Sam unleashes the might of his katana.



Jacques is surrounded in the Phantom Zone.

dad even when he's journeyed some 500 years in the past. However, when you do get to control her, it's like playing a more action-orientated version of *Resident Evil* – just swap demons for zombies and you're there. In fact, considering the style of control along with the look and feel of the character, Michelle seems like a clear homage to the game that spawned the survival horror genre on consoles.

The many and varied styles of combat ensure that the game never gets dull. Michelle blasts away with abandon, Samanosuke attacks with all the guile and grace of his samurai roots, while Jacques offers yet another face to things. While the Frenchman lacks the finesse of his Japanese partner, bludgeoning his way through the game with chains, whips and maces, he can make special use of 'glides' – special points in the air that he can latch onto in order to swing his way across gaping chasms, or climb tall buildings with.

THE THIRD DIMENSION

The single biggest visual improvement to *Onimusha 3* is its leap to 'proper' 3D visuals. Its predecessors used a combination of hand-drawn and computer generated backgrounds, which, although extremely beautiful, looked like something from another age as soon as the

stunning technical wonder of *Devil May Cry* materialised on PS2.

Onimusha 3 has a look and feel that's quite similar to *Devil May Cry*, and it's equally as fast and just as smooth as the original Capcom masterpiece too. The 3D perspective allows the player much more freedom to explore, and far less in the way of jarring camera angles, although there are still one or two situations where you can't see where you're going. Most importantly, the move to 3D has cut down significantly on the amount of loading time as you move from one scene to another.

All this would count for nothing if the look of the game was compromised, but Capcom has done an amazing job in creating the environments in this game. Okay, so they're not quite so beautifully rendered as their 2D predecessors, but the sheer amount of stuff happening on-screen in terms of background detail, amount of enemies, special effects – it's clear that this is a technical achievement that

A BRIEF HISTORY OF TIME

All this time travel makes for some brain-frazzling puzzles.

With Sam in the present day and Jacques enjoying the 16th century, the stage is set for all kinds of mad tasks. Here Jacques is in a temple powered by a crystal. In the present, Sam can't get any further because the crystal's been stolen. What do you do?



1. Here we see one of the mystical portals used to swap between characters. The fairy that accompanies you, Ako, can use these to travel in time, carrying items with her.



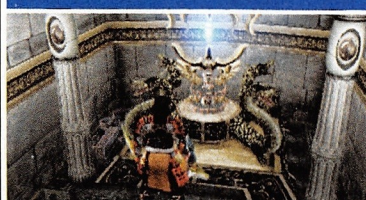
2. Jacques needs to reach the end of the room, but those crushers mean business! There's simply no way he could reach the power crystal at the end. Without dying first, that is.



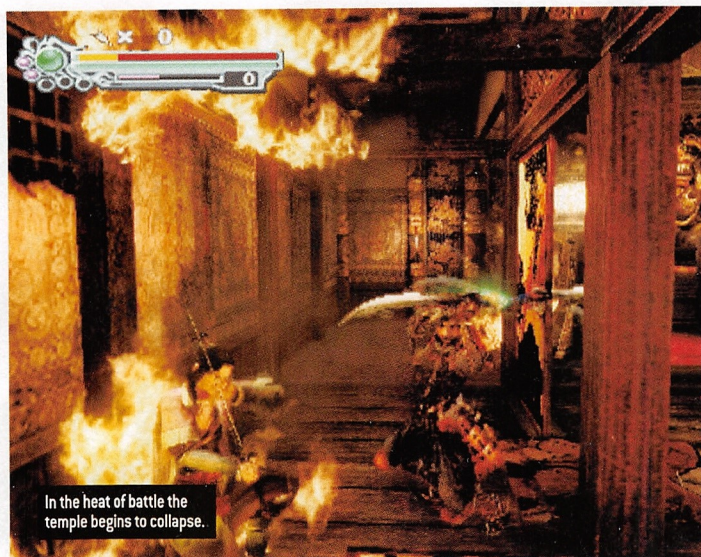
3. In the present, the machinery is long since dormant, but there's no power crystal. Samanosuke finds a strange clue – a pair of wings. Perhaps Jacques could use them...



4. Jacques uses the wings on the green icon on the floor. Now he can swing across to the end of the room and collect the power system, shutting the crushers down.



5. Sending the crystal forward in time to Samanosuke, now he can power up the machinery, slow the crushers down and make use of the previously dormant lifts! Job done!



“THE MANY AND VARIED STYLES OF COMBAT ENSURE THAT *ONIMUSHA 3* NEVER GETS REPETITIVE OR DULL.”

easily eclipses *Devil May Cry*, *Castlevania* and even Capcom's flagship *Resident Evil* games.

The beginning of the game, which kicks off in the middle of an all-out war between men and demons, gives you an immediate impression of just how stunning this game is – and that's just a taster of what's to come.

END OF AN ERA

So it's the final curtain for *Onimusha* on PlayStation2, but what a way to go out. Capcom originally stated that the first game was originally developed for PSone and then moved onto PS2, which explained the static backgrounds and limited gameplay. The sequel was an enormous improvement, but when you look at *Onimusha 3* it's clear that what you're seeing is a brilliant action adventure title, designed specifically for PlayStation2. The new 3D look puts the likes of *Devil May Cry* and

Castlevania well into the shade. But more importantly, every criticism you can level at the previous games in the series has been ironed-out, the result being as close to the perfect action adventure game as you're likely to find.

Our one big worry about *Onimusha 3* was its length. The first *Onimusha* was woefully short, and we feared that Capcom might short-change us on this adventure too. Not so – we'd estimate that there's a good 20 hours of play crammed into this game, and that's if you rush through doing the bare minimum, ignoring the side-missions and making no effort to find the hidden items, power-ups and sacred rune-stones. Don't do it! You'll be depriving yourself of some of the game's highlights.

In fact, just about the only criticisms we can level at the game are the fact that most of the battles are too easy (even random button mashers should be able to progress) and some

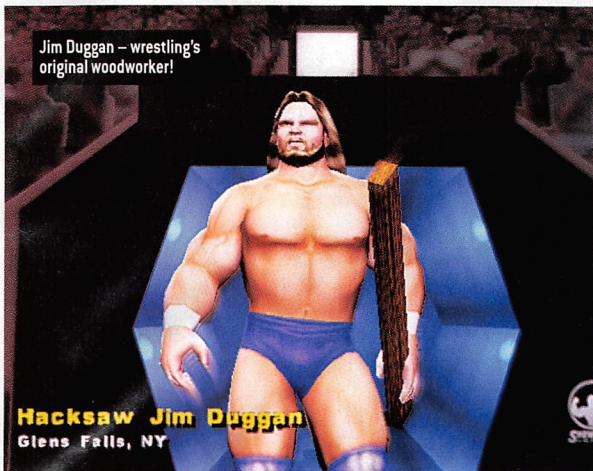
of the puzzles just a tad obscure. One particular puzzle is all about lighting some candles in order to open up a new part of the level. The solution involves tracking down the candleholders and then making use of the special fiery attack of a weapon you won't have used for hours in order to light them up. Hardly as easy as falling off the Eiffel Tower, we think you'll agree.

Still, these are excruciatingly small criticisms of what is clearly one of the best PlayStation2 releases in ages. *Onimusha 3* looks the part and plays the part, oozing sheer class on every level. The Jean Reno gimmickry draws attention to the game, but it's the experience of sitting down and playing it that gives *Onimusha 3* the plaudits it so obviously deserves.

/ RICHARD LEADBETTER



PS2 VERDICT	
> UPBERS > Superb smooth graphics > Untouchable gameplay > Masses of levels > Great replay value	> DOWNERS > Obscure puzzles > Bosses too easy > Combat could be harder > It's the last one!
GRAPHICS > Breathtaking in every way	9
SOUNDS > Great effects, so-so music	7
GAMEPLAY > Feels almost perfect to play	9
OVERALL SCORE Easily one of the best games to be launched on PS2 this year, <i>Onimusha 3</i> raises the bar in terms of graphics, gameplay and sheer class. Sadly, it's the final <i>Onimusha</i> game, thankfully it's also the best.	
9	



LEGENDS OF WRESTLING: SHOWDOWN

Back to the ring – and back to life – for some of wrestling's all-time heroes in this historical collection of grappling greats.



> TYPE	WRESTLING
> PLAYERS	1-4
> OUT	NOW
> PUBLISHER	ACCLAIM
> DEVELOPER	ACCLAIM
> ONLINE	NO

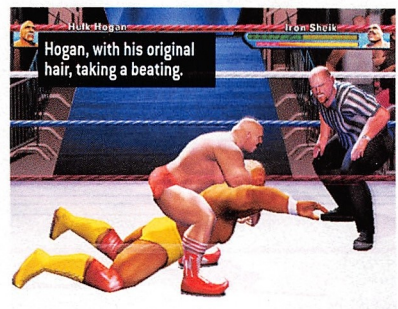
WE QUITE LIKE THE LEGENDS OF WRESTLING GAMES. *Legends of Wrestling 2*, in particular, was a blast and could even be considered superior to the unanimously beloved *SmackDown!*. How things have changed. The *SmackDown!* series struggled on PS2 at first, before last year's mighty instalment went crazy, featured semi-naked women, scored 10/10 and sent the official franchise back to number one.

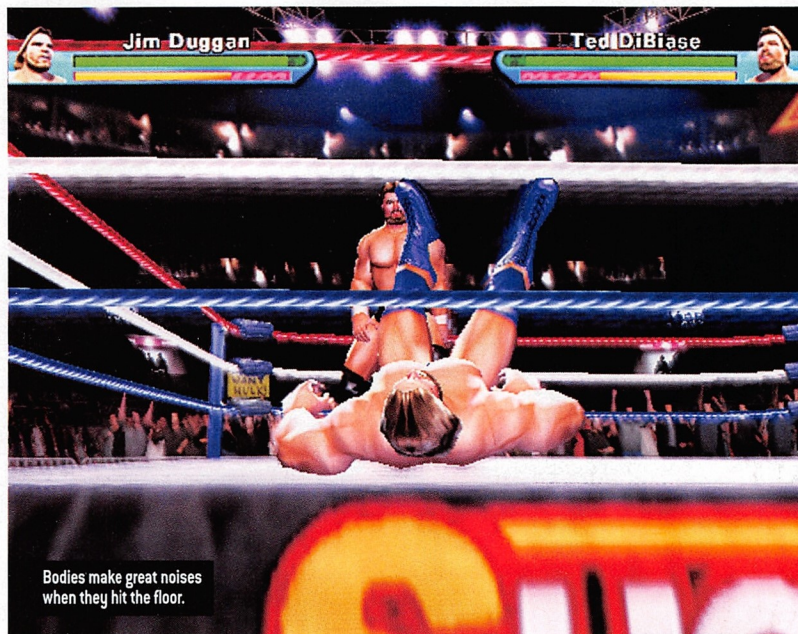
Legends of Wrestling, meanwhile, has gone backwards. Miles backwards. It's like this third instalment has engaged warp speed while leaving the gear stick in reverse. The simplicity, speed and accessibility responsible for the success of the first and second *Legends* games has been completely abandoned in this third incarnation, with *Showdown* opting for an all-new and wholly inferior control system. Where we once loved the game, we're now confused by it. What was once innovative is now convoluted; the straightforward gameplay of the previous two games dumped in favour of a new control style that quite simply doesn't work. The magic has gone and we're gutted.

This is all spelled out for you in Bret Hart's tutorial section, where The Hitman (Bret Hart, not Agent 47) talks you through the workings of the game – almost as if he understands. It starts off promisingly enough. The X button is the 'strike' button – punch and kick. The basics. We already knew that. Pressing X while at the same time wiggling the left stick produces one of four moves, depending on whether you pressed the stick up, down, left or right. Simple. No problems there. Then it's the same again with the Triangle button, this time producing a set of moves the

game calls 'ready attacks'. These are throws and generally more impressive manoeuvres, despite the simplicity of performing them. When your man is motionless, hitting a direction and pressing Triangle makes him grab his opponent. Moves then follow. All simple so far, yes? So why have we got such a downer on *Showdown*?

It's the Square button that the game hinges – and ultimately falls down – upon. Square is your basic 'block' button, but also your 'counter attack' too. Either somebody made a very bad decision here or a stuff up of monumental proportions has occurred. Regardless, it spoils the whole game. "Your opponent can counter your





counter," says Bret of the counter moves, confusing both himself and us. So you spend a lot of time using it, with matches often deteriorating into a Square-pressing speed competition to block and/or counter attack as quickly as possible. All strategy then goes out of the window, as all you have to do is hope your wrestler responds to the Square press first. And, as Bret wisely said, you can counter your opponent's counters, so fighting can get mighty fiddly as the two of you counter, re-counter, and eventually lose track. Ultimately, as you apply ice to your bruised thumbs you'll be left wondering why they changed it at all.

NOT FROM THE MAKERS OF

Reading the game's official web site gives a big clue as to the reasons behind this puzzling new direction. Halfway through being made, *Legends of Wrestling: Showdown* was taken away from the team that created the previous two games and handed to an entirely different development studio. New people, as they tend to do, bring in new ideas. Sadly, in this case they were all the wrong ideas.

The last *Legends of Wrestling* game that we loved so much used the crazy 'Swingometer' counter system, whereby players had to hit precise targets to counter moves and pull off the big attacks. Timing and accuracy were therefore essential if you wanted to win. Now, that's been replaced by pot-luck and button mashing, as the

"FIGHTING CAN GET MIGHTY FIDDLY AS YOU COUNTER, RE-COUNTER AND LOSE TRACK OF WHO'S SUPPOSED TO BE COUNTERING WHO."

series' best feature is ditched in favour of a simpler but much less effective way of fighting. The Square button-hammering counter play slows matches to a crawl, with clumsy and unbelievably stupid PS2-controlled wrestlers adding further insults to the *Legends* legacy. We know wrestlers aren't the cleverest of fish, but even so we were rather unimpressed by the quality of artificial intelligence on show here. All too often wrestlers will repeat moves multiple times in the vain hope that you'll have forgotten what it was they were trying to do and fall for it on a second or even third attempt. It's laughable in places, and while this might sound a bit like your normal Saturday night pay per view, it can get more than a bit frustrating.

The look of the whole thing is also rather hit and miss. The 'backstage' and story sections are very rudimentary in style, with basic intros to fights, not much happening and sparse presentation and thrills. In the ring, the wrestlers actually look okay – they're big, colourful and chunky enough to be recognisable – but have this nasty habit of 'resetting' themselves between some animations. A wrestler falls to the floor, rolls around for a bit then warps a few inches to lock into his 'standing up' animation. This sort of shoddiness is sadly all too apparent, and again, has us longing for the polished arcade thrills of *Legends I* and *II*.

Ringside detail is OK, but not that hot up close. Fans wave ironic banners, while a layer of 3D supporters stand near the railings to create a passable illusion of depth. Don't look at them too closely though, especially the ones that face the wrong way when the camera gets too intimate, or

BRING ON THE LEGENDS!

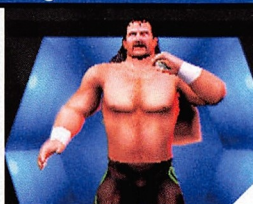
In the case of *Legends of Wrestling: Showdown* older really is better.



ULTIMATE WARRIOR



ANDY KAUFMAN



JAKE 'THE SNAKE' ROBERTS

A big coup for the series, Ultimate Warrior has "come out of retirement" for a return to the ring. In reality all this means is he went down to the developer's studio and had some photos taken, but it's a nice addition to the rota – and one that helps the game appeal to those who remember the WWF of old.

The goofball actor had a stage character he crowned World Inter-gender Wrestling Champion and used this to fight women in the audience at his shows. Jerry 'The King' Lawler got involved, and the two apparently had a genuine fight that ended with Kaufman spending three days in hospital. So they say, anyway.

Yes, he enters the ring with his sack. The sack contains his snake Damian, a tame little python that used to scare the hell out of defeated opponents he dangled it on. The RSPCA wouldn't allow it today. Deserves his place in the wrestling hall of fame primarily for inventing the awesome DDT move.



If you live in Hoxton and are struggling for new haircut ideas, get a copy of this.



Does anyone else remember that *Banana Man* cartoon? The on ABC?



Hammer buttons to escape holds, hammer buttons to counter. It's not that complicated.



you'll be tempted to put your PS2 in for a service such is their lack of detail. The wrestlers' ring entry sequences are short and to the point, featuring little more than your man walking into the ring – which is illustrative of the plain, bargain basket presentation style of the whole package. It's not flash, that's for sure.

DIDN'T YOU USED TO BE SOMEONE?

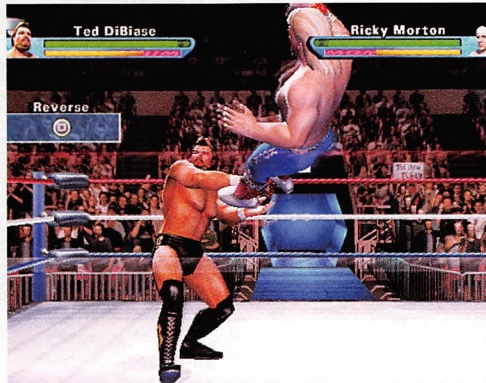
But, sizeable visual and gameplay niggles aside, if you're looking for a game that has all the old wrestlers in it, you won't be disappointed. Well, you won't be disappointed with the wrestler select screen, at least, thanks to its impressive shoe-horning in of around 70 of the world's top superstars, some of which are no longer with us,

as illustrated by the oddest curiosity in *Showdown* – the game's Memorial section. Here, in a completely non-ironic and extremely serious and grown up fashion, the makers of the game say thanks to the older stars of wrestling that are now wrestling with the angels. The ones we remember, the ones we feel guilty about not remembering – especially if they're now dead – are all thanked, as their in-game likenesses pop up on screen. Several of them are locked at first, but true legends such as The Ultimate Warrior and Randy 'Macho Man' Savage – for so long subject of rumours about a return to the WWE – are in here, making *Showdown* a great way to relive the joys of those pioneering WWF years in the 80s and 90s. Many more recent and better-

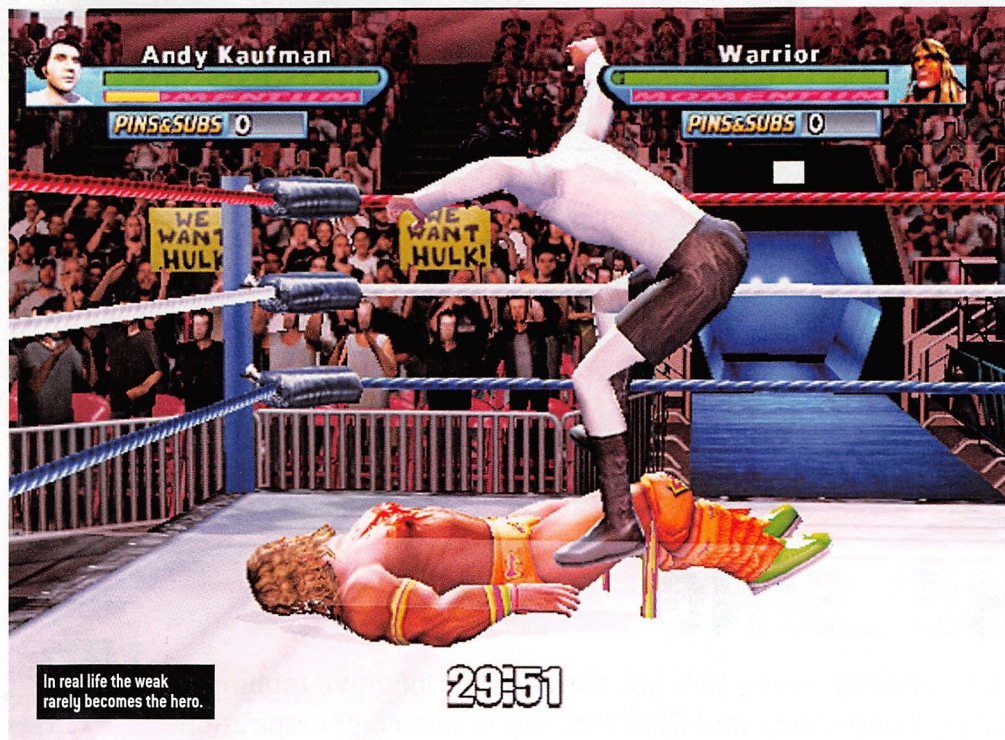




Press Square to counter. Then press it again – it's pretty much all you do.



Oh look. We're having to press Square again. There's a surprise.



In real life the weak rarely becomes the hero.

29:51

preserved stars are among the line-up too, with the likes of the white-faced Sting (no, not *that* white-faced Sting), current WWE Latino star Eddie Guerrero and the omnipresent Hulk Hogan all in there for the young, or young at heart wrestling fan to recognise. Which is all very good and everything, but when you get to appear as the superstars, your play options are exactly as you'd expect, nothing more.

There's a Quick Play option to throw you and them into immediate action, along with an editable Match system for selecting from nine standard issue fight formats. There are tag matches, two-on-ones, four-man-tag battles and all your usual wrestling mash-ups. There are a further 11 match types, all superbly managing



to stay within the norm. You can choose from Hardcore Rules fights, First Blood challenges, Table, Cage, Iron Man matches and more – but there's not much in here that the WWE SmackDown! series hasn't already been doing on PlayStation2 for several years already.

WHAT'S THE STORY?

Showdown's Story mode now starts in the 1970s, charting your man's rise through the wrestling ranks. It's a pretty basic affair, with fights topped and tailed by short, text-based introductions that offer a rudimentary reason for your impending fight. Likewise, there's also a short, text-based ending when you lose. As a way of stringing matches together for you to play on your own, it's just about passable. It's as if somewhere along the line the makers forgot to replace the boring placeholder text screens with the proper, finished ones.

But as with all dumb fighting games, it's all a lot better in multiplayer – providing you're not expecting too much. When a big, eight-man rumble's going down, there's enough happening on screen to divert attention away from the game's flaws. Simply hammering the square button seems a much more acceptable way of spending your time when you're fighting a real person, although it's still largely rubbish.



DEAD OR ALIVE?

All these wrestlers feature in *Showdown* – but can you pick the living from the deceased?

	DEAD	ALIVE
A. Randy 'Macho Man' Savage	☐	☐
B. Eddie Guerrero	☐	☐
C. Jerry 'The King' Lawler	☐	☐
D. Davey Boy Smith aka British Bulldog	☐	☐
E. Ted Dibiase	☐	☐
F. Andre the Giant	☐	☐
G. Jake 'The Snake' Roberts	☐	☐
H. 'Ravishing' Rick Rude	☐	☐

*Answers correct at time of going to press.

A: Alive; B: Alive; C: Alive; D: Dead; E: Alive; F: Alive; G: Alive; H: Dead.

ANSWERS

While the chance to play as some of the all-time wrestling greats living and dead is a fantastic selling point for any wrestling fan, the game beneath these celebrity faces just isn't up to scratch. Not only is it a country mile away from the fantastic WWE SmackDown! Here Comes The Pain, it also manages to undo all the good work done by the Legends series so far. A rather awkward and ungainly step backwards from the speedy thrills of the previous Legends of Wrestling games, Showdown is sadly quite a massive let down. Ironically, we're left thirsting for a return to the good old days.

/ GARY CUTLACK

PSW VERDICT

UPPERS	DOWNERS
- Plenty of WWF legends - Looks okay - Just enough fight options - Passable Career mode	- Slow and awkward to play - Inferior to Legends I and II - Not enough new additions - Rather basic presentation

GRAPHICS > Fat, colourful, well-made old superstars **7**

SOUNDS > Nice bone crunches, average elsewhere **5**

GAMEPLAY > A backward step from the last version **5**

OVERALL SCORE

It's all such a shame. *Legends of Wrestling* has changed beyond all recognition, losing the fun of the previous games in favour of a silly control system that never feels right. Weep for the loss.

6



VAN HELSING

The legendary vampire killer shows he's not above a spot of grave robbing as he picks the bones of *Castlevania* and *Devil May Cry* in search of inspiration.



> TYPE	ACTION ADVENTURE
> PLAYERS	1
> OUT	NOW
> PUBLISHER	VIVENDI
> DEVELOPER	SAFFIRE
> ONLINE	NO

IF YOU'RE GOING TO LIBERALLY BORROW from other games, at least have the good grace to pick out some quality ones. It's widely recognised that two of the best third-person hack-and-slashers in recent times are *Castlevania* and *Devil May Cry*, so as much as you might have seen it all before, *Van Helsing* turns out to be a quality trip down memory lane.

And it's not just because all three are about bashing the undead back to the depths of Hell either. The vampire hunter's grapple hook that serves as both a weapon and a tool for reaching

distant platforms is a like-for-like replacement for the whip in *Castlevania*, while weapons such as the auto-aiming dual pistols are lifted straight from *Devil May Cry*. Even the pick-ups are pretty similar: defeated enemies and destructible objects such as barrels leave either a shower of green crosses that are totted up at the end of every mission to spend on upgrading Van Helsing's abilities, or a red cross that replenishes his health.

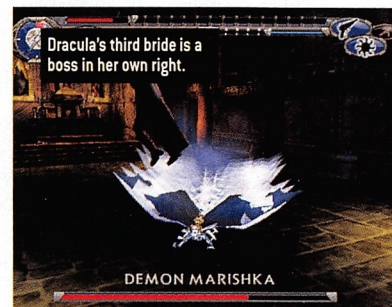
PLAYING HOOKY

Van Helsing definitely takes its lead from *Devil May Cry* in terms of graphics. The gothic backdrops, such as monstrous cathedrals, courtyards and wintry plains, are all highly detailed and convincingly East European in design, while the monsters and Van Helsing himself are superbly modelled and flip around fluidly. The fixed camera presents the only niggle; picking the best perspective to show off the environments isn't necessarily the ideal viewpoint for combat, and consequently you'll often find yourself being attacked by off-screen enemies. Fortunately, the auto-targeting helps to resolve this problem since Van Helsing will always hit an enemy even if the only thing that you can see is their life bar being depleted. There are also a handful of disorientating camera changes that are more of a nuisance than

anything, and can lead to you guiding Van Helsing the wrong way momentarily.

The bulk of the game is spent following a linear path battling skeletons and other supernatural beings, and watching the frequent cut-scenes that seem to pop up after every skirmish. It's all highly polished stuff and reflects the quality of the movie perfectly.

Van Helsing's main tool is a grapple hook and along with its standard slash attack there's a nifty move where you can toss an enemy upwards, jump up with him and then employ your wrist-attached buzzsaw blades to 'gut' them in mid-air. Nice. It's also possible to use the grapple to pull an enemy towards you to stun him momentarily so you can finish him off unopposed. The grapple and blades are always to





hand but only one firearm at a time can be equipped, and since all your enemies are only susceptible to a certain type of ammo, you'll need to remember what kills what. Bashing a couple of buttons is all the skill you'll need to whiz through the early parts of the game, but Van Helsing's more dextrous finishing moves and acrobatic dodges become vital by around the halfway mark, so you'll need to master them too.

ROYAL RUMBLE

It's the famous monster battles that pose by far the game's greatest challenge. Sadly, the cool premise of taking on Frankenstein's Monster, the Wolf Man and Dracula's three vampire wenches, in addition to the Count himself, is never fully

realised or even explored. These classic monsters show up as bosses and tend to be introduced in a cut-scene without a convincing explanation for their appearance... kinda like the movie. Work out their simple attack patterns, unload a few rounds of ammo to empty their life bars and they usually utter a cryptic clue about Van Helsing's shadowy past before disappearing for a few levels. They're cameos at best and sum up what turns out to be a pretty disjointed, episodic story – not that the plot actually matters in a game of this kind.

Puzzles are equally as routine and never stray beyond using one of your weapons to release a jammed door mechanism or to break a sealed magic door. Still, at least there's no backtracking through huge sections of a level to find an exit point, like in *Castlevania*, nor do you need to kill every enemy in an area in order to move on to the next. This is really just a cop-out method of increasing a game's lifespan and its

"AT LEAST VAN HELSING HAS THE GOOD GRACE TO RIP OFF TWO QUALITY GAMES IN CASTLEVANIA AND DEVIL MAY CRY."

inclusion would have been particularly frustrating here since there's a short loading break every time you enter a new area anyway. Finding secret items that unlock cheats, new weapons and extra challenges provide what little replay value there is, though these timed mini-games are insanely frustrating and seem to rely on the game's worst aspects to provide an artificial challenge.

Not a huge amount of depth then, but if you take *Van Helsing* on its own terms then you'll find it a very entertaining game. Slaughtering the unrelenting hordes of deadites with some truly spectacular moves is hugely satisfying and, while it might not take you more than a couple of days to fully complete, it's an exhilarating ride while it lasts. All the more impressive because it's a film licence, and we all know how they usually turn out. Good work Mr Helsing, we look forward to the inevitable sequel.

/ JONATHAN TODD

MONSTER MASH

Show these famous creatures who's the real boss!



HYDE

STRENGTHS: Considerable strength, which he shows off by swinging those big arms.
WEAKNESSES: Shoot him from distance or get in a few blade hits and back off.



FRANKENSTEIN'S MONSTER

STRENGTHS: Stamps his foot to cause tremors, has a speed burst, and can throw you.
WEAKNESSES: Keep the fountain between you and him then blast with the shotgun.



DRACULA'S BRIDES

STRENGTHS: Lightning strikes and a force field that rebounds bullets onto Van Helsing.
WEAKNESSES: Kill the two at the side first with your blades and use the pistol on the third.



IGOR

STRENGTHS: Fires four bombs, followed by a hail of fireballs and gunfire.
WEAKNESSES: Keep leaping and rolling, and use your pistol as he changes platforms.

PSW VERDICT

UPPERS

- > Atmospheric graphics
- > Squelchy weapon sounds
- > Some creepy monsters
- > Steals from good games

DOWNERS

- > Nothing new
- > Extremely linear
- > Hopeless dialogue
- > Short and repetitive

GRAPHICS > Detailed Van Helsing and enemy models

7

SOUNDS > Nice, fleshy sound when you hit an enemy

7

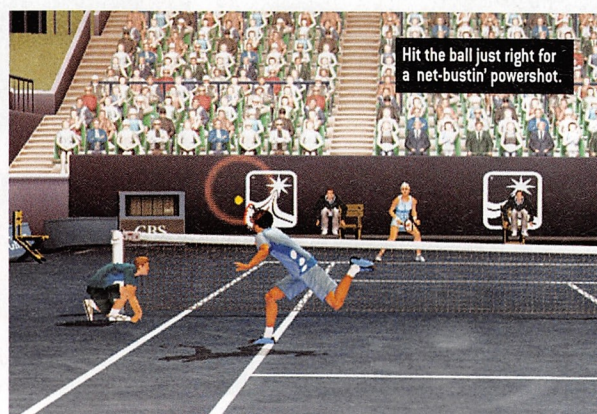
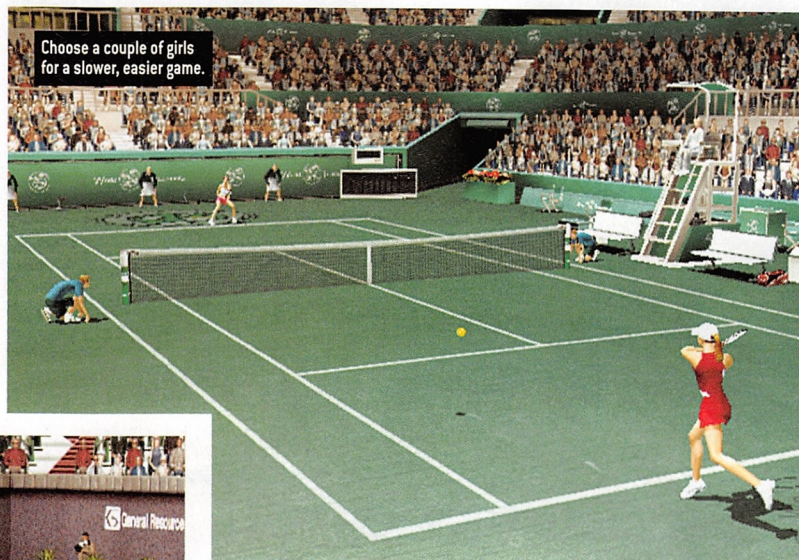
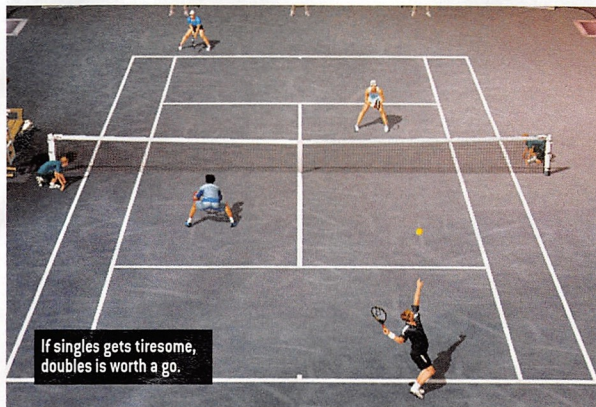
GAMEPLAY > Uninspiring, yet strangely rewarding

7

OVERALL SCORE

You get what you pay for: a solid third-person action adventure game that's a lot better than most, mainly because it pilfers their best bits and tries to perfect their weaknesses.

7



SMASH COURT TENNIS PRO TOURNAMENT 2

Anna Kournikova? Check! Daniela Hantuchova? Check!
Good fun to play? Check! Better than *Virtua Tennis 2*? Umm...



> TYPE	SPORTS
> PLAYERS	1-4
> OUT	JULY
> PUBLISHER	SONY
> DEVELOPER	NAMCO
> ONLINE	NO

IN THE DAYS BEFORE PRO EVOLUTION

Soccer captured the hearts, minds and joypads of the PSW editorial team, there was actually another game that we played each and every lunchtime. With it came all the classic trappings of a great multiplayer sports title – an excitable crowd of spectators, roars of victory, tears of defeat and expletive-ridden oaths of vengeance. The game was called *Virtua Tennis*.

We started playing it on Dreamcast and we continued playing it on PS2 when the sequel, *Virtua Tennis 2*, appeared. To this day *Virtua Tennis 2* remains the benchmark – nothing has bettered it. Namco's original *Smash Court Tennis* effort on PS2 came close by capturing the look and feel of its Sega sibling. But what it gained in visual detail, it lacked in gameplay magic. Think of it as the Greg Rusedski foil to *Virtua Tennis*'s all-conquering and supremely powerful Pete Sampras. Perhaps not surprisingly, exactly the same thing can be said about *Smash Court Tennis Pro Tournament 2*, but to a lesser extent.

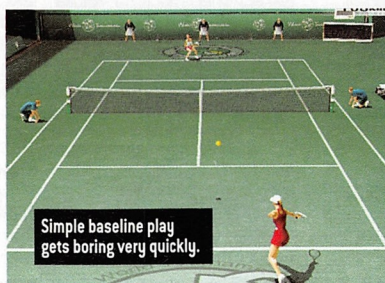
It's clear that Namco has gone balls-out to create its vision of the ultimate tennis game, and to be fair, it's crammed to the gills with options, gameplay modes and tutorials. But get two

players going head-to-head and there's none of the raw passion that turns a technically good game into an all-time classic. We're referring to inspired gameplay, perfect controls and all the other things that give players an all-important emotional attachment, feeding the hunger for victory at any cost. It's just not there.

What you do get is a very accomplished single player game. Arcade and Exhibition modes enable you to jump straight in at the deep end, with well-rounded, powerful tennis stars (and Tim Henman) instantly at your disposal. But the clue to this game's depth is in the title – it's all about the tournament options, not the quick fix

exhibition matches. You start off by creating your player (the default player seems to bear an uncanny resemblance to Jim Carrey in *Dumb and Dumber*) before launching headlong into your tennis career. This takes the form of a calendar screen split into months. Choose what to do in each month – training, entering tournaments and such like – and build up your player's skills, stamina and silverware. Climb up the world rankings and before you know it, you'll be bowing to royalty as Wimbledon champ.

Well, you would be, were it not for the torturous path you need to take in order to make it to the top. Gaining experience and improving



NEW BALLS PLEASE

A few of the diversions used in the Training and Challenge modes.



SHOOTING SERVICE

What's the idea? To improve your serving by making you hit one of two stacks of balls on the other side of the court.

Why? This is all about learning how to accurately place your serve and getting used to the excessively sensitive analogue control system.



TARGET CRASHER

What's the idea? Simple – it's all about using the ball to smash a certain amount of targets within a time limit as you play through a rally.

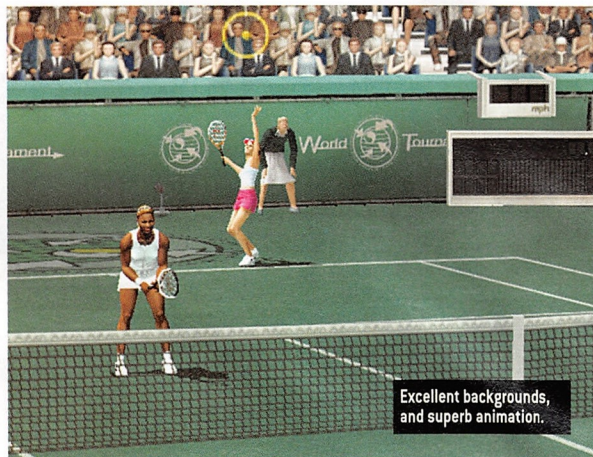
Why? Again, it's about accuracy, learning how to place a killer shot in the heat of tennis battle. Far more difficult than it looks!



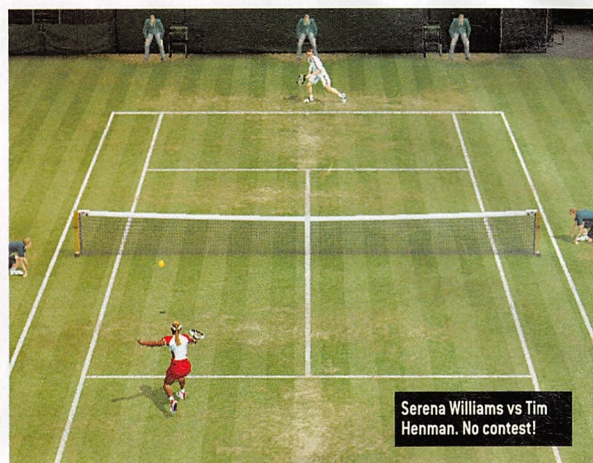
QUICK STEP

What's the idea? This is all about learning to effectively return shots from all areas of the court as your coach serves them up to you.

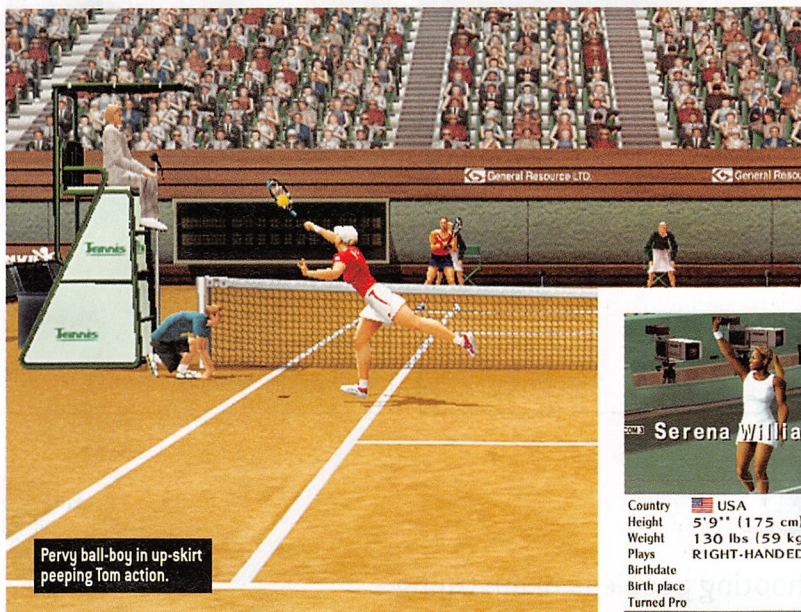
Why? It's a pressure-free way to learn how the shots work. It's also the quickest way to gain experience in Tournament mode.



Excellent backgrounds, and superb animation.



Serena Williams vs Tim Henman. No contest!



Perry ball-boy in up-skirt peeping tom action.



Country USA
Height 5'9" (175 cm)
Weight 130 lbs (59 kg)
Plays RIGHT-HANDED
Birthdate
Birth place
Turned Pro

Slovakia
5'11 1/4" (181)
123 lbs (56 kg)
RIGHT-HANDED



Justine Henin-Hardenne
Kim Clijsters
Daniela Hantuchová
Anna Kournikova

your skills takes hours, and you'll find that your early attempts at winning tournaments are almost guaranteed to fail. It's all the more frustrating when you fire up the Arcade mode and find that the fully developed tennis players are just so much faster, more responsive and accurate with their shots. It's a long way to get to a similar level in the Tournament mode, but there's a very real danger that this important part of the game is just not accessible enough or sufficiently fun to hold your interest.

That's a shame because in between the repetitive training sessions, the tournaments themselves are very good fun. Rather than play out entire matches, you take control of your player during the crucial turning points in each game. At these points you're given a specific 'mission' – such as serving up an ace or beating your opponent by two clear points. Meeting the mission criteria gets you through to the next round, but failing to do that still gives you the chance to progress by beating the opponent on points. This genius notion cuts out the majority of the tedium of the match and introduces much needed variety. The Tournament mode also features matches that require you to be higher

"IT'S THE TIM HENMAN OF TENNIS GAMES – A BIG NAME PLAYER WITH PLENTY GOING FOR IT, YET SOMEHOW DOOMED NEVER TO MAKE IT."

than a certain world ranking in order to qualify. This can be frustrating – especially at the early stages of the game where you're routinely beaten and your ranking stays lodged at 250. Occasionally though, you can enter a short and fairly easy qualifying tournament that lets you play with the big boys.

Overall though, what we're dealing with here is the Tim Henman of tennis video games – a big name player with plenty going for it, yet somehow doomed never to make it to the top. *Smash Court Tennis Pro Tournament 2* is packed full of good ideas, plays smoothly and offers up one or two interesting surprises. But what we need from our sports titles is superb multiplayer action, and while this doesn't exactly disappoint, it doesn't feel like half the game that *Virtua Tennis 2* is either.

Sport is all about the competitive element, the skill, the thrill of winning and getting one over on

your opponent – and the best video games are no different. *Smash Court 2* is entertaining, but vanquishing your foe won't evoke a colossal, Neanderthal-esque roar of triumph, or the accusing finger of ridicule and its companion cry: "You're shit... ahhhhhhhh!" But *Virtua Tennis 2* will. Our advice? Hire this and see if you like it, but if you want the undisputed master of the genre, then hunt through the pre-owned bins for the rare-ish Sega game instead.

/ MARK SORRELL

PSW VERDICT

UPPERS	DOWNERS
> Superb tournament mode	> Not as good as VT 2
> Great tutorials	> Frustrating player creation
> Tons of players and courts	> Bizarre player graphics
> 'Ace' control method	> Limited sub-games

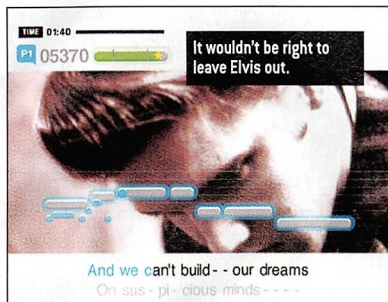
GRAPHICS > Great animation, poor player graphics 7

SOUNDS > Excellent effects, music straight from a lift 6

GAMEPLAY > Tons of depth in here, fun to play 8

OVERALL SCORE
On paper it should trounce *Virtua Tennis 2* with its superb Tournament modes and gameplay options. But it lacks the fun and the passion of the Sega classic, so it doesn't.

7



SINGSTAR

Sony has decided that while shooting people is okay, trying to sing like Elvis is much better. Know what? We agree.



> TYPE	SINGING
> PLAYERS	1-2
> OUT	MAY
> PUBLISHER	SONY
> DEVELOPER	SONY LONDON STUDIO
> ONLINE	NO

LOVE AT FIRST SIGHT. IT'S A TRICKY THING, leading you to forgive everything from serial infidelity to the most bizarre bedroom fetishes, and sometimes (if you're really unlucky in love) homicidal axe-wielding tendencies. As for us, we fell in love with *SingStar* on our first play nearly a year ago. The final version has its flaws, but we remain starry-eyed about Sony's first attempt to create a game that you play simply by singing.

It's very simple — one of 30 famous tunes plays, complete with video, and you sing along into one of the two hefty mikes provided. Croon it, and you'll win. Croak it, and the game will tell you. Your voice leaves little droppings of tone

across the screen, so you can see how well you've sung a particular phrase — as can everyone who's watching. Try battling with a friend to sing the best, or join together to get a high score. There's even a Pass-the-mic mode so that up to eight players can join in. In other words, it's another classic party game in the mould of the recent smash hit *EyeToy*.

I'LL JUST HAVE ONE GO...

It's the attention to detail that wins you over. *SingStar* has no interest in being the slightest bit geeky. It's a six-foot male supermodel with the Gucci jeans and the carefully waxed scrotum. It's

the fittest attendant at the perfume counter. In fact, it's not really 'games' at all. It's cooler than you and it knows it. After all, this isn't a game designed to be taken apart by pale fanboys in dimly lit bedrooms. It's made to show your friends, to laugh over, and to work very well at entertaining your socks off. There's a great intro to the tune of Jamelia's *Superstar*, showing a disparate group of groovers trying to sing the song, and having a right old laugh as they do. This is what the game's really all about.

In most games, the Career mode is the meat of the title. Not here, though. Because *SingStar* is designed to be a party game, the Career mode is rather more of an afterthought. Simply sing your way through songs while visiting a lot of clubs, represented by mostly static pictures on screen. It's deliberately low-key, letting the songs do the work of impressing you.

To make sure you don't get scared, *SingStar* leads you gently by the hand. Do badly in the Career mode, and you won't really be penalised. You'll just have to keep trying, painfully singing the same songs, until you get it right. Supportive text messages start coming through on your in-game phone, and promoters seem surprisingly



FOUR REASONS TO BUY SINGSTAR NOW!

Don't like singing? Maybe these features will tempt you.

OWN A COUPLE OF GOOD MIKES!



The microphones that accompany *SingStar* are surprisingly good, and they have normal mono plugs that go into the bundled USB adapter. So you could use them for recording a spoken word album, if you really wanted.

SING LIKE A HELIUM BABY!



The game can play back your entire song with you singing like a tiny baby! It's the funniest thing since penguins. If you so choose you can also lower your voice to sound like, well, a man with a low voice.

PLUG IN YOUR EYE TOY!



If you own an *EyeToy*, you can substitute the vids for your own grinning, gurning features and make yourself the star! Either that or make yourself realise just how bad you look every time you open your mouth.

OGLE LADY-FLESH!



If all else fails, you can watch some chart-topping lovelies gyrate in their music videos. But not that pig-ugly one in the middle here. That's just plain wrong. We'll have the one on the left, thanks.

P1 01780

Belt out this anthem while doing the dance.

You can get your - self clean
You can have a good meal

P1 03180

There's plenty of lady cheese to croon along to.

Sun shines through the rain - - - of all
Life so lone - ly

P1 02650

A-Ha hand out some '80s boy-band pop cheese.

Oh it's no bet - ter to be safe than sor - ry
Take on me

P1 00000

Static images show the clubs you sing in.

P1 00000 P2 00000

Duets are the perfect way to test singing skills.

Spin - ning out on me
I don't need no - man

happy to let you back in to sing after terrible performances. Thankfully, *SingStar* cuts through the incredible cruelty at the heart of a real singing career and replaces it with some nice made-up people, helping you along. That's why it's only a game.

I DID IT MY WAY

If you're familiar with Karaoke, you might be reading this review, nodding your head knowingly and murmuring something like: "Yeah, man. I'm the king of the sing. I'm going to buy this and OWN all my friends. That'll teach them to dis' my Shirley Bassey." Well, we've got bad news, pal: Karaoke this ain't. This is a singing game, and like all games it needs some measure of frowning concentration. Start ad-libbing, singing harmony, adding your own crazy timing to your lyrics, and your score fails to climb. This is all about hitting the right notes at the right time. Also unlike Karaoke, the default setting in *SingStar* is to have the original star still singing behind your voice. You can turn this off for extra kudos, but we wouldn't advise it until you know every note of the song. There's nothing like a mediocre score to take the edge

off your euphoria. What you thought sounded like Craig David on a really good day was, in fact, the perfectly average howlings of an inebriated young adult male. Damn.

Unless you're about four years old, you can't really justify choosing the 'easy' setting – but unless you're in the Four Tops, you shouldn't go near the 'hard' option either. So it's your destiny to shoulder on manfully through the 'medium' setting, wailing like a banshee. Take Jamelia's *Superstar*. Top song, no problem with singing it, right? Trouble is, Jamelia decides to give it some towards the end of the tune, going all over the place and completely improvising. And you have to follow or lose. Tough stuff, but nobody ever said singing like a pop star was easy.

There's an upside to this struggle though; play for long enough and your singing will actually improve. *SingStar* shows you, clearly and without any room for heated debate, just how good or bad your singing is. Alter your pitch, and you'll see just when you hit the note. It won't do anything for your theatrics, but it will end up making you actually able to sing.

So if you have dance mats that are starting to gather dust after years of hard use, if you can't

resist belting out a tune at your local Karaoke night, if you love simply competing against friends in a party environment, or if you just honestly love singing, then go buy *SingStar*. Like *EyeToy* before it, *SingStar* won't last forever, but it's a great new party title. It's a bit like going out with an attractive yet painfully truthful lady. It leads you in, all friendly and saucy, and then hits you with the truth: you ain't all that. Then you try, and suddenly – you're a superstar too!

/ JOFF 'THE VOICE' BROWN

PSW VERDICT

> UPBERS

- > Cooler than thou
- > You'll be a better singer
- > You might feel like a star
- > Rockin' music

> DOWNERS

- > Only 30 songs
- > Some just won't get it
- > Surprisingly exacting
- > Career mode's dull

GRAPHICS > Placid pastel pics, great pop promos

8

SOUNDS > The selection of tunes is undeniably great

9

GAMEPLAY > Sing your heart out and you'll love it

8

OVERALL SCORE

If you don't like singing, then don't bother. But if you're up for a fairly self-conscious laugh, then you owe it to you and your idiot mates to buy a copy and go for it. Excellent.

8



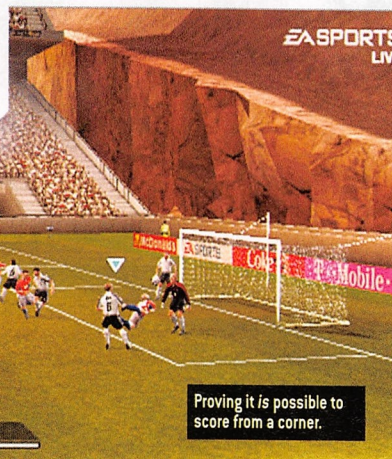
Rooney's hamstring goes before the kick-off.



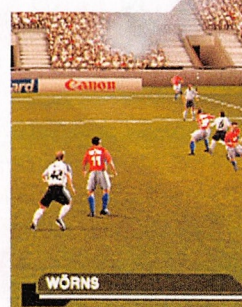
England's defence typically backs off.



Looks like that's 2-0 to Holland then...



Proving it is possible to score from a corner.



UEFA EURO 2004

Why, in this golden age of *Pro Evo 3*, does anyone even bother making football games anymore? We certainly can't explain it.

> TYPE	SPORTS
> PLAYERS	1-4
> OUT	NOW
> PUBLISHER	EA
> DEVELOPER	EA
> ONLINE	NO

FOOTBALL IS A VERY SIMPLE GAME. LOOK NO

further than the Ferrari and Bentley-driving Premiership thickos who are paid vast sums to play it for the evidence. While the best can survive on instinct, the rest would probably have trouble stacking shelves. Forget your double nutmegs, triple stepovers and overhead scissor kicks, just hoof it forward and hope for the best.

Getting the basics right is what separates *Pro Evolution Soccer 3* from the rest of the pack. It instinctively feels spot-on, from the intuitive controls and the responsiveness of players to the

slick passing and the overall challenge of sticking the ball in the back of the net. If there's one criticism to be made it's that many of the domestic team names and players have been bastardised to keep the licencing lawyers happy, but unless you're the sort of spoilt kid who gets all three of Man Utd's strips every single season then you probably won't really give a toss if it's Van Nistelrooy or Von Smallhausen on the scoresheet – you know who scored.

By far the biggest factor of *UEFA Euro 2004's* appeal is the overall presentation. Recognisable

player names and incredible player likenesses save you the trouble of having to edit entire teams, while the commentary from John Motson and Andy Gray actually relates to what's happening on the pitch, unlike the banal banter between Peter Brackley and Trevor Brooking in *PES*. If only the same attention to detail had been lavished on the rest of the *UEFA* package.

POOR FIRST TOUCH

Unlike other games in the genre, there's never a moment during play when you think you're actually taking part in a real game of football. It always feels simulated, mechanical and just plain wrong. The players jerk about in an unconvincing manner, being forced to complete an exaggerated motion-capture animation even when performing a relatively simple task like receiving the ball. This means that, by the time they get the thing under control and pass it, any player in space has been closed down. Not only does it make the players look like they're playing in quicksand, it completely ruins any hope of stringing together a slick, free-flowing game.



Hold off the man Heskey-style and lay it off.



Jostle for position when a cross comes in.



In fact, the passing is pretty shocking all round, particularly when you're deep in an opponent's half. The off-the-ball system where you control both the run of the receiving player and the player delivering the through ball is totally unnecessary and overcomplicated; an over-stylised excuse for the lack of intelligent, autonomous player movement. And it can't be justified when simply pressing the Triangle button in PES3 releases a through-ball that works most of the time.

This frustrating sense of convolution is an all-too-familiar theme that runs throughout UEFA. Crossing the ball to an unmarked striker in the box is admittedly too easy a method of scoring in PES3, but at least it's all down to your timing and ability. In UEFA Euro 2004 there are separate controls for putting a general ball into the "zone" and for sending in an early cross. We really can't understand the point of splitting the controls here – surely it would have been easier to have crossing assigned to just one button and let the timing of balls into the box be the player's decision.

IN THE ROUGH

Even the set-pieces are overly elaborate. In PES3, direct free-kicks are basically boiled down to a sensitive power bar for either lofting one over the wall or full-on drives – and that's all you need. UEFA Euro 2004 uses a three-click golf swing-style system for no discernible reason other than to make life difficult. The only benefits are placing swerve before striking the ball and, as a defender, being able to move the wall. Corners are worse still. No matter what type you select or which one of three attackers you're forced to pick out, the ball always ends up in the 'keeper's arms or being headed clear. In trying to give set-pieces a more haphazard feel and featuring all the jostling for position that goes with them, the developer has made them too mechanical.

And that's the fundamental problem with UEFA Euro 2004. For every layered control scheme that's been introduced, the arcade immediacy that the earlier games thrived on has been lost. Pro Evolution Soccer 3 has surged further ahead because it does the same things



SIX OF THE BEST

Bored of the main Euro 2004 mode? There are another six modes to try, with Home and Away, Fantasy and Situation a first for the series.



FRIENDLY Raise morale by banging in goals against minnows.

HOME & AWAY A two-legged game that works best against a mate.



FANTASY Take turns to select a player position in a dream team.

SITUATION Choose the score and minutes gone before starting.



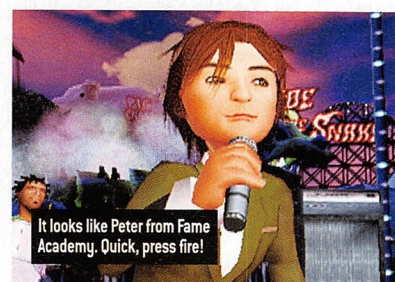
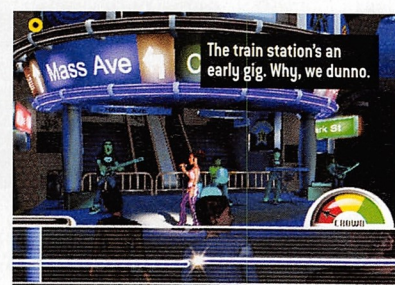
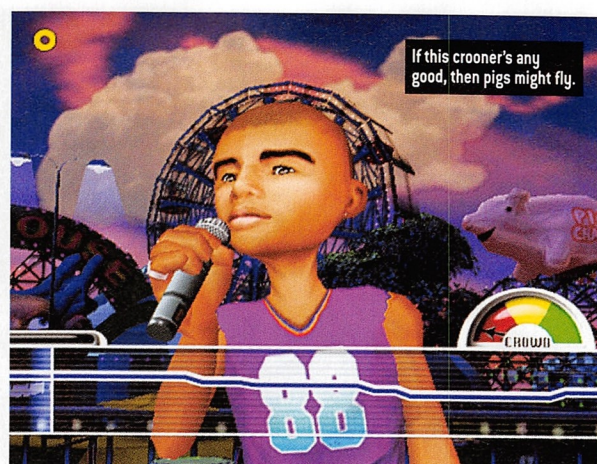
TOURNAMENT Play a league, knockout cup or Euro 2004 itself.

PENALTY SHOOTOUT Bend it like Beckham... and cheat on Posh.

much simpler and better. So it's the same old story then: if you really can't live without all the correct player names, or the admittedly stunning presentation, then get this repackaged version of FIFA 2004. See if we care. But in all honesty, Pro Evolution Soccer 3 isn't the only footy game that's ahead of UEFA Euro 2004 in the PSW football games' league now.

/ JONATHAN TODD

PSW VERDICT	
> UPPERS > As glossy as ever > Proper names and kits > More spectacular goals > Lots of game modes	> DOWNERS > Rubbish passing > Rubbish set-pieces > Rubbish through ball system > Sluggish players
GRAPHICS > Stunning, bold likenesses across the board	8
SOUNDS > Big-match atmosphere, good commentary	8
GAMEPLAY > Not the beautiful game we know and love	5
OVERALL SCORE It's basically FIFA 2004 in a new pair of underpants. And it brings with it all the same problems we had with the last game. Excellent right up until you step out onto the pitch.	6



KARAOKE STAGE

Check, one two... welcome to PS2's other singing game. You're going to need some guts, a good ear and a great big pair of lungs for this one.



> TYPE	SINGING
> PLAYERS	1-2
> OUT	MAY
> PUBLISHER	KONAMI
> DEVELOPER	HARMONIX
> ONLINE	NO

WE'RE GOING TO PRESUME, FOR THE SAKE

of this review, that you like singing. Because if you wince at the very sight of Tina Arena, if you hide when your mates force you into a boozy singalong, or if you'd like to strangle Tom Jones with a length of microphone flex, then you're going to hate *Karaoke Stage* more than Avril Lavigne hates the bossy grown-ups who ground her for, y'know, sk8ting and stuff.

Karaoke Stage is a Karaoke game. You sing, warble or wail one of 35 or so songs through the optional USB microphone, and the game rates you on every single note. When friends and family aren't guffawing at your hapless efforts,

they can ogle a big-headed alter ego on screen, singing to a crowd in various venues. Starting at a party, you'll progress to a *Pop Stars*-style telly concert and on to a giant super-stadium in just eight songs. *Karaoke Stage* can also be used as a straight-ahead Karaoke machine, provided you only want to sing the songs that come with it.

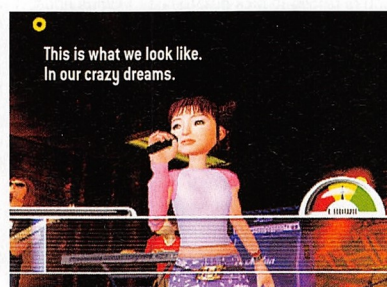
That's the bare facts up front then. But we suspect that you'll be wondering whether the whole thing actually works. Well, technically, yes, it's fine. The microphone's a little tinny and certainly can't hold a candle to rival *SingStar*'s heavyweight double microphones. But the game really does know which note you're singing, and

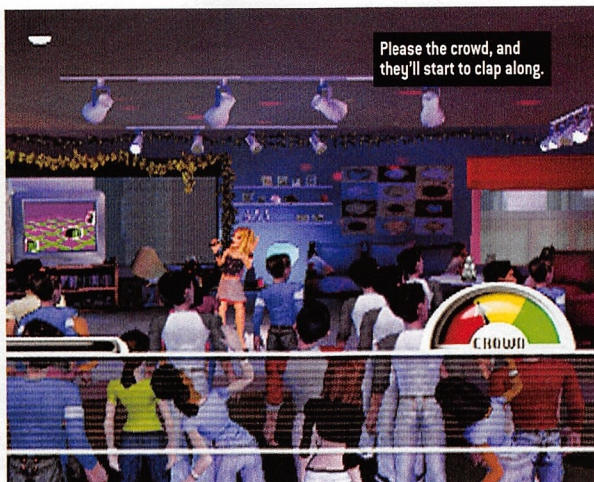
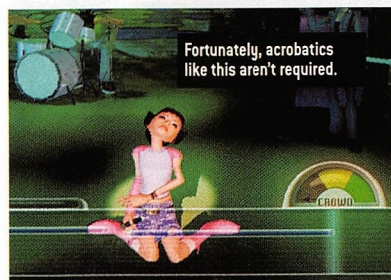
can really tell when you're crooning like Sinatra or bawling like Sinitta. As you've probably realised by the score on the end of the page, *Karaoke Stage* should technically be the best game ever – but somehow, it isn't.

SING IT BACK

Although *Karaoke Stage* takes you by the hand through the whole process of singing, via a range of simple menus and colourful tutorials, it's still going to be a bit daunting for those who've never let a computer judge their talent before. The first thing to get to grips with is how you're judged. As well as checking whether you're in tune or not, *Karaoke Stage* rates you on how long you can hold each note for. Even if you're note-perfect, your score will slump lower than Rachel Steven's album sales unless you can keep singing each note and line till the bitter end. This can lead to once familiar songs like *Billie Jean* sounding like, "BelleeeJeeeenEeeesNoooootMyyyyLoovveeer!"

Almost every 'yeah' and 'woooooah' has to be sung too, or you'll jeopardise your precious high score. Considering that there's no option to shorten the songs like there is in *SingStar*, you're left with the usual Karaoke problem of singing





the song, sweating and ashamed, right to the bitter end, while everyone else in the room looks bored and slightly embarrassed for you. Still, once you're in the groove and you've learned the right way to croon, *Karaoke Stage* is a lot of fun. The in-game crowd will gradually show their love with whoops and cheers if you sing well, and they'll even clap along if you tilt the appreciation meter on the right hand of the screen into green. You'll feel like a bit of a star if you do, and fortunately the Easy mode is forgiving enough for all but the most tone-deaf.

Your onscreen mini-star gyrates and lip-synchs with creditable grace, although there's only one voice track for each song, meaning if you choose a lady singer, she'll belt out a deep male voice underneath your singing. Graphics are on the cheesy side of satisfying, but they kind of work. This ain't *Metal Gear*, right?

THANK YOU FOR (MOST OF) THE MUSIC

Ultimately, a Karaoke game lives and dies on the strength of its tunes. And *Karaoke Stage*'s music selection is only half brilliant. You've got your *Billie Jean*, you've got *Celebration* by Kool and the Gang, you've got *Wind Beneath My Wings*

and Huey Lewis and the News' *The Power of Love* for the mums and dads. Rockers may enjoy Nickelback's *How You Remind Me* and The Kinks' *You Really Got Me*. But too much of *Karaoke Stage* is filled with semi-famous fluff you might have heard a few times on the radio, but are unlikely to want to mimic like a parrot; *Crawling in the Dark*? *Alien Love Triangle*? Didn't think so. *Karaoke Stage*'s music all seems ever so slightly dated, whereas *SingStar* boasts a range of ultra-contemporary pop-dross from the likes of the Sugababes and The Darkness. Add in the fact that this is all session music, albeit fairly inoffensive clones of the original tracks, and you can see why *Karaoke Stage* falls behind.

It's not all bad though. *Karaoke Stage* won't grab game-phobic people like *SingStar* can, but it's certainly kid-friendly enough to get budding Pop Idols into the whole singing thing. What with Konami's mastery of the dancing game genre, we could be forgiven for expecting the definitive Karaoke game from them too. But this isn't the *Dancing Stage* of singing games, which is a bit of a shame. Playing *Karaoke Stage* feels more like taking part in some obscene Japanese video game cult than playing the ultimate party

BLAME THAT TUNE



We judge the Karaoke Stage songlist.

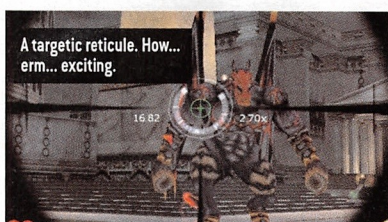
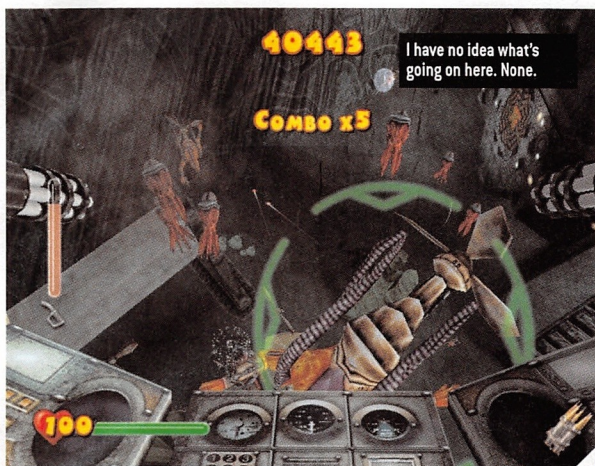
Hit Me With Your Best Shot	— Eh?
Smooth Criminal	— Wicked
Son of a Preacher Man	— Wicked
Addicted	— Eh?
All You Wanted	— Eh?
Are You Happy Now?	— Eh?
Believe	— Rubbish
Billie Jean	— Wicked
How You Remind Me	— Wicked
Bizarre Love Triangle	— Eh?
Broken Wings	— Rubbish
Celebration	— Wicked
Chain of Fools	— Wicked
Complicated	— Rubbish
Crawling in the Dark	— Eh?
Don't Know Why	— Wicked
Every Morning	— Wicked
Everything You Want	— Wicked
Girls Just Wanna Have Fun	— Wicked
Hey Jealousy	— Eh?
I'm Coming Out	— Wicked
Know It	— Wicked
Kiss Me	— Wicked
Ladies' Night	— Wicked
Like a Virgin	— Wicked
One Week	— Wicked
Red Red Wine	— Rubbish
Save Tonight	— Wicked
Science Genius Girl	— Eh?
She Talks To Angels	— Eh?
Son of a Preacher Man	— Wicked
The Power of Love	— Wicked
Waiting For Tonight	— Wicked
Billie Jean	— Wicked
Wind Beneath my Wings	— Rubbish
You Really Got Me	— Wicked
You're the One That I Want	— Rubbish
End of the World As We Know It	— Wicked
When a Man Loves a Woman	— Wicked

game, which is what it should be like. But to be honest, it's pretty impressive that it works in the first place. Or is it really elementary for the PS2 to tell how well you're singing? We're not sure. Either way, *Karaoke Stage* is sound as a pound rather than ghetto-fabulous. If you play all the way through *SingStar* and are hankering for another game to tell you just how fan-bleedin'-tastic your singing voice is and you're up for a cheesy night in, then go for it.

/ JOFF BROWN

PSW VERDICT		
> UPPERS > Some great tunes > Easy to use > Has a certain cutesy charm > Actually works	> DOWNERS > One mike, unlike <i>SingStar</i> > No <i>EyeToy</i> , unlike <i>SingStar</i> > Older tunes, unlike <i>SingStar</i> > It's no <i>SingStar</i> , y'know...	
		GRAPHICS > Decent big-headed dancing lads and lasses 7
		SOUNDS > Well-recorded cover tunes, not much variety 7
		GAMEPLAY > Be thankful it doesn't judge looks, pie-boy 8
		OVERALL SCORE <i>Karaoke Stage</i> can leave you feeling like a bit of a freak rather than a superstar. Kiddie looks and oddball tunes don't sit well with its ambition to be a proper crowd-pleaser for all ages, but it's fun.

7



SERIOUS SAM: NEXT ENCOUNTER

Let's do the time warp, again...

> TYPE	FPS
> PLAYERS	1-8
> OUT	NOW
> PUBLISHER	TAKE TWO
> DEVELOPER	CLIMAX
> ONLINE	YES

SERIOUS SAM COMES TO US AT A TIME WHEN the balance of firstperson things has shifted just a little too far in the favour of slower-paced and more thoughtful shooters. We aren't exactly complaining here, but variety, they say, pickles the onions – or something like that. Anyway, not too long ago in the grand scheme of things these squad-based affairs or stealth-based shenanigans were indeed a rare species amongst a sea of the more established – and essentially more primitive – shoot anything that moves escapades. You shot, you circle-strafed, you collected a key and then you moved to the exit – nice and easy like. These days you sneak before you run, think before you shoot, and – on

a more frequent and alarming basis – simply avoid confrontation altogether. Like, seriously!

So welcome, Sam, welcome. Thanks for trying to remind us what games used to be like; that a game didn't require plenty of shadows or creepy music or correct speaker positioning or some new-fangled gadgets to absorb us in a thrilling action adventure. You did a good job of it on the PC and Xbox a couple of years ago, proudly displaying the amount of love that was poured into you by designer Croteam.

Which brings us to the fact that this iteration of *Serious Sam* wasn't even developed by Croteam. Climax has design duties on this one – the series' debut on the PS2 – and while this indeed plays like and looks a lot like the robust laugh-a-minute blastathon that the original *Serious Sam* was, a whole host of idiosyncrasies prevent it from scaling the same exciting heights.

DOOM TV

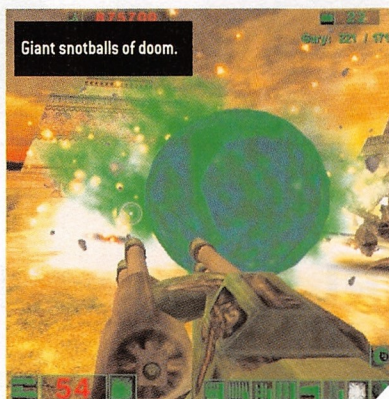
Serious Sam plays a lot like a cross between the original *Doom* and the crazed *Smash TV*, that is: fast and frenzied shooting of wave up wave of enemy monsters. Yes, you lay waste to thousands of enemies, you circle strafe, you

collect the keys (although *Next Encounter* has been dumbed-down a little further so that you don't always need a key – the killing of a set group of enemies will do more often than not), and then you move to the exit. Indeed, everything about this game feels like it's been designed and implemented around this very central tenet. And when it works, it works well – the thrill of mulching scores of enemies at a time while your health and ammo levels are low can be particularly captivating. Oh, and it's fast... real fast.

A lot is lost in the execution though. There are around 40 maps on offer in *Next Encounter* which may sound like a lot, but due to a lack of inspiration become repetitive far too quickly and rarely dazzle. Apart from the bland and low-resolution textures, there just isn't much in the way of interesting architecture in the levels on offer. There's little variation on the "vast open space" theme, and if you do happen to find yourself in an area where there isn't a lot of room to circle strafe in, your enemies will quite conveniently charge mindlessly into your stream of outgoing fire.

Next Encounter does boast a rather sizeable gaggle of goons to shoot at, but these too lack a





Showdown: The Sam vs. The Duke



As far as action-men go, you simply can't beat Duke Nukem. The one-liners, the big guns, the blatant misogyny... it's a thing of genius. Sam looked like a pretty "serious" contender for Nukem's crown for a while, but failed to shape up as a real challenge come showtime. He does have a nice t-shirt though...

lot in the area of creative flair, and as just described, the nous to pose a serious threat to the serious Sam. Your basic two-legged green Pac-Man aspirant is your most common fodder early on in the game, and – as is representative of the level of the AI of other nasties in the game – will quite happily throw itself onto your chainsaw and to its instant exploding death. And what sort of a cunning strategy must Sam employ to pull off this highly-effective manoeuvre against the thirty or so either hopping or flying your way? Nothing but the simple act of standing still in the one spot.

There is one standout highlight in the bestiary of *Next Encounter* however, and that's the howling bomb-wielding guy that has been pinched from the original *Serious Sam*. This grunt emits a steady scream as it runs towards you, with contact resulting in a damaging blast. Very early in the piece you come to appreciate the comical wailing whenever it springs up – especially when there's a group of them. And just as you've quelled that immediate threat, another handful or so are thrown your way just to keep you on your toes. But that's just one guy. Overall though, there just aren't enough

memorable characters in *Next Encounter*, nor do they offer much of a challenge.

BRING IT ON!

But there are a couple of hooks that keep you going, not least of all that *Next Encounter* is available at a reasonably budget price. Apart from that attractive proposition, the weapons – most of which are entirely traditional – offer a wide range of ways in making things go pop. The chainsaw is surprisingly potent while the gas gun should satisfy more than pyromaniacs.

And there is, of course, multiplayer. The entire adventure can be played co-operatively via split screen, and there are three competitive modes on offer: deathmatch, carry the flag and a 'tag' style game. Varied yes, but it should be noted that the handful of maps on offer are large enough to be aimed exclusively at more than two players. Since only two people can play from the same console, you'll need to go online to get your kicks with up to seven other players.

Ultimately, *Serious Sam* falls flat because the implementation of the fast and frenzied pace of action took precedence by *Climax* over everything else in the game – especially the

textures, the level design, and the enemies. And without the presence of the high level of polish needed in these areas, there's not much incentive to go on.

If *Serious Sam Next Encounter* were a drink, then it'd think of itself as a Molotov Cocktail. In reality, it's the sort of drink you could quite comfortably enjoy with a straw. A frilly straw. With loops in it.

/ MARCH STEPNIK

PSW VERDICT		
> UPPERS > Shoot! > Kill! > Mayhem!		> DOWNERS > Bland enemies > Lazy challenge levels > Boring level design
GRAPHICS	> Functional – this game runs fast	5
SOUNDS	> Rock pig tracks rule, man, but the rest is completely forgettable.	6
GAMEPLAY	> It's a rental affair, or a weekend romp. Basic multiplayer might entertain for another weekend after that.	6
OVERALL SCORE Shoot, strafe, find the key, find the exit, and then repeat approximately forty times. Great for a weekend rental... and that's it. Next!		6

MINI REVIEWS

Generously-chested women, hot firemen and young girls with massive tools. Our email inbox? Nah, it's mini reviews.



FIREFIGHTER F.D 18

Break down doors. Extinguish fires. Rescue trapped folk. Repeat. Doze off.

> TYPE	ACTION
> PLAYERS	1
> OUT	NOW
> PUBLISHER	KONAMI
> DEVELOPER	KONAMI
> ONLINE	NO

YOU'RE A FIREMAN – YOU PUT OUT FIRES AND

rescue folk. Not only is this an admirable career path in the real world, it's also a blindingly simple yet rock-solid premise for a game in the virtual world of PS2. How could such a novel idea possibly fail?

Taking control of your chap is fairly simple – the right analogue stick is employed to direct your hose, while the left takes care of movement. Your main task is to find survivors and rescue them, a task made easier by the radar in the top right hand corner of the screen. Simply point your hose at the source of the problem, put out fires and rescue people. Sometimes you'll have to get out your axe to break down doors and walls, or hack through piles of boxes. If anyone dies, you fail. We must admit, we found the whole 'people dying in fires' thing somewhat at odds with the 'fun game' angle. Then again, you could say that about just about any game that deals in death.

But our main gripe is that it's simply not much fun. You aren't so much led about the levels as bullied. At the first sign of a puzzle you're given the solution, making the act of physically solving them pure menial labour. Then there are the bizarre 'boss-fires' – bigger fires with a health bar and attack patterns, rather like the end-of-level bosses you get in action adventure games. Weird.

Firefighter F.D 18 just doesn't deliver on its potential. The innovative and unique idea of fighting fires and rescuing people is lost as the game never deviates from its well-worn and dull formula. It's not terrible by any means, but it is boring and fails to make the best use of an original premise.

/ MARK SORRELL

PSW VERDICT

OVERALL SCORE

Full marks for attempting something a little different, minus six marks for it being repetitive and dull. That brings us nicely to the final tally of...

4



CY GIRLS

Apparently they're very popular in Japan. But then so is raw fish.

> TYPE	ACTION ADVENTURE
> PLAYERS	1
> OUT	NOW
> PUBLISHER	KONAMI
> DEVELOPER	KONAMI
> ONLINE	NO

LIKE TRANSFORMERS BUT COMPLETELY DIFFERENT,

Cy Girls is a game based on a series of action figures from the land of the rising sun. The two reasons you've probably never heard of them before are a) they're Japanese, and b) you're too old to play with action figures these days. Never mind. Time moves on, accept it.

Best described as *Prince of Persia* meets *Metal Gear Solid*, except with two attractive lady ninja spies, you'd be forgiven for thinking this could be the best game ever made. The two playable ladies are called Ice and Aska, Ice being the hot blonde sort with the big boobies who specialises in shooting people. Aska, on the other hand, is the oriental ninja type. Her specialities include running up walls and decapitating people with her sword. In order to see everything the game has to offer you must play through the story twice, once as each character. Supplied on two discs – one for each of the two ladies – this is a truly massive adventure.

Sadly, we doubt that there are many people who *will* play the game through twice. Controls are reasonable but the camera manages to make them seem harder to use than they really are, particularly in close combat. Although two modes are available – expert and beginner – neither seems to manage to give the player a clear view of what's going on.

While there are some stylish moments and a lot of game to get into, the graphics, polish and design are all lacking. This is gaming by the numbers and just doesn't match up to the current standard of action adventure titles. Not even the boobies can save it.

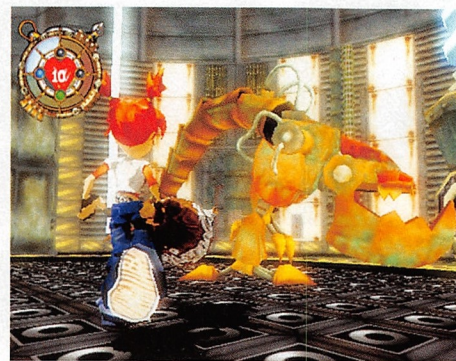
/ JON TODD

PSW VERDICT

OVERALL SCORE

This all seems somewhat old-fashioned and uninspired. Aside from it's sheer size – and it is big – there's very little else to get excited about here.

5



MALICE

And the coveted award for the longest development period ever goes to...

> TYPE	PLATFORMER
> PLAYERS	1
> OUT	NOW
> PUBLISHER	ARGONAUT
> DEVELOPER	EVOLVED
> ONLINE	NO

WHAT A TORTURED PATH THIS GAME HAS TAKEN.

Originally conceived during the middle ages as an Xbox launch title, *Malice* has been subjected to a bewildering amount of bugging about before finally coming to rest on your PS2. Strangely, it doesn't seem to have done the game too much harm at all.

The eponymous *Malice* is a redheaded, pigtailed demi-goddess with a massive hammer. She's set the task of defeating the Dog deity in order to regain her powers and thus her place in heaven. This boils down to a fairly traditional platform adventure where in which Malice jumps about the place beating up stuff and solving puzzles all over the universe, in addition to defeating the seven incarnations of the Dog deity himself.

This is an impressive looking game, with some really delicious texturing and fancy graphical effects that give everything a lovely sparkle and fizz. The hazy sun effects and wonderfully realistic grass are particularly worth mentioning. Character design is also different enough to give the game a good dose of personality and set it apart from the raft of platform adventures languishing on the shelves of your local game store. The crisp, distinctive aesthetics are backed by gameplay that, although considerably less crisp and distinctive, still manages to be entirely competent.

This is a more than capable affair for youngsters or those who want a fairly safe, fairly simple game to amuse them over a quiet weekend. While it never really shines, it offers a predictable and polished experience. Sometimes, that's all you really want.

/ JOFF BROWN

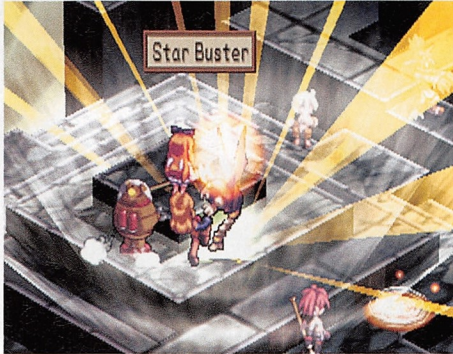
PSW VERDICT

OVERALL SCORE

It won't shock you to the very core like some kind of atomic strength video game popping candy but there again, it's unlikely to disappoint you much either.

6

MINI REVIEWS



DISGAEA

Turn-based strategy game anyone? (Silence). Anyone? (Cough... silence).

> TYPE	STRATEGY
> PLAYERS	1-2
> OUT	NOW
> PUBLISHER	KOEI
> DEVELOPER	NIPPON ICHI
> ONLINE	NO

LET'S BE CLEAR HERE, DISGAEA IS A GAME THAT ONE in ten of you will kill for and the other nine will deem the most boring thing since they coloured maths grey. It's a turn based strategy title with statistics by the screen, a full helping of levelling up, 150 character classes and over 100 spells. Frankly, you probably already know which side of the divide you're on.

Infused from the top down with stunning, hand-drawn Japanese madness, this game has a glorious and unique aesthetic to it. Hand-drawn cut-scenes look fantastic and keep the plot moving forward with an injection of kooky humour. The hand-drawn artistic excellence of the cut-scenes is extended to your team of crack fighters and the increasingly bizarre enemies they must face too, making the game a visual treat from start to finish.

The fighting system itself is well thought out, suitably complex without ever becoming confusing. It's turn-based and works on a grid, with options picked from menus. It's all very much a game for the brain rather than the thumbs. The urge to make your party more powerful and discover new skills, abilities and items is permanently tugging at your brain-strings, so even if the plot doesn't drag you along, the desire to develop your group certainly will.

This is an expertly crafted game, blessed with intelligent play mechanics and captivating visuals. What's more, the sheer length of the quest will see you immersed into the *Disgaea* world for considerable time. It's a pity there aren't more titles as crammed full of development love as *Disgaea*.

/ MARK SORRELL

PSW VERDICT

OVERALL SCORE

A brilliant, deep and quite beautiful strategy game with a fantastic amount of gameplay. Quite definitely a Marmite game; you'll either love it or hate it.

8



DRAKENGARD

The adventures of one boy and his fire-breathing dragon. It's not a joke.

> TYPE	ACTION ADVENTURE
> PLAYERS	1
> OUT	NOW
> PUBLISHER	TAKE 2
> DEVELOPER	SQUARE ENIX
> ONLINE	NO

YOU'RE A ROCK HARD WARRIOR AND YOU RIDE

about on a dragon that does whatever you want, mostly setting fire to things and melting stuff. So begins the epic tale of swords and sorcery that is *Drakengard*. Marrying the traditional role-playing game with full-on fighting action, this is aiming to tread new ground in a generally inert genre. The plot is typical, albeit lavish, fantasy gibberish concerning the battle between the Empire and the Alliance. You play the part of Kyme who gives up his voice to make a lifelong pact with the dragon known as 'Red Dragon.' Work experience kid come up with that one?

The game is loosely split into two parts – the flying and the slashing. Flying is mostly about simple dog-fighting and strafing runs and fails to engage until the big bosses get involved where things can look quite beautiful, even if they don't play with any real pizzazz. The fighting sections are mostly dull with little in the way of tactical choice and lots of uninspiring enemies. Although mashing up big groups of enemies with a massive combo is suitably satisfying, *Dynasty Warriors* did it much better, so there's little here to recommend. Wandering around on foot is dull because the levels are mostly huge and empty to allow for the Dragon's aerial range. This is backed up by a free roaming option, which allows the player to replay fighting sections.

It's the flying sections and luxuriant plot that really make this worth your time, and then only if you really feel the need to fly a dragon about the place. All in, *Drakengard* is a fairly middling adventure, which needed more innovation or quality to make it stand out.

/ JON TODD

PSW VERDICT

OVERALL SCORE

Lacks either the inventiveness or graphical flair to really impress. Too lightweight for role-playing fans and too long-winded for action fans, this sits somewhere in the middle.

6



SEVEN SAMURAI 20XX

Legendary samurai film gets turned into rubbish game. What are the odds?

> TYPE	ACTION
> PLAYERS	1
> OUT	NOW
> PUBLISHER	SEGA
> DEVELOPER	SAMMY
> ONLINE	NO

THE SEVEN SAMURAI IS A VERY WELL-RESPECTED

black and white samurai film made in 1958. You may not have heard of it, but you will almost certainly have heard of the film it inspired – a certain 'Star Wars'. Well, this game is based on the original 1958 film licence. Sadly though, instead of using any of the unimaginably rich pickings from the film, they've thrown the whole lot in the bin and invented an entirely new world from scratch.

It's simple fighting game at heart, where the aim is to get the highest combo you possibly can by killing a huge number of enemies in an unbroken chain. The game world is split into combat areas and free-roam areas. These are presented in an extremely linear fashion. Usually, you're required to do nothing more than follow glowing arrows on the floor between combat areas, where you're required to defeat an arbitrary number of enemies before being allowed to progress. This results in a game with all the gut-wrenching excitement and pure adrenal euphoria of counting the number of old women on a bus.

The lack of decent fighting action makes the other shortcomings all the more pronounced. Furthermore, *Seven Samurai 20XX* has little in the way of graphical finesse, which is sad considering the original film's stunning visuals. There's considerably more gaming fun to be found in the battle to open a packet of peanuts with greasy hands than there is in the whole of this game. If you want to slash up thousands upon thousands of enemies, buy the infinitely more engaging *Dynasty Warriors 4*. If you want to be a rock hard ninja type, go to Japan and learn how to do it for real.

/ MARK SORRELL

PSW VERDICT

OVERALL SCORE

This is a huge, hairy, old lady's wart on the face of the original film and an insult to serious gamers. Utterly vacuous and pointless, you don't need this in your life.

2



BIG FISH

Tim Burton returns with a (tall) tale worth catching. Honest.

DISC INFO

- > **Starring**
Ewan McGregor
- > **Director**
Tim Burton
- > **Year** 2003
- > **Released** Out now

Spielberg almost landed this one, but only Burton has the vision and spiritual innocence to scatter such fairytale mood over a basic father/estranged son story.

Edward Bloom (Albert Finney) is an ailing old geezer known for wheeling out a surreal mini-story of his life at the slightest provocation. His son, Will (Billy Crudup), has long since removed himself from the fantastical hot air, but returns in search of truth and reconciliation when he hears Pa's dying of cancer. Rather than hook the audience with sadness and then make amends in time for the credits, Burton has made a heart-warming tale which manages to twin fantasy and reality in a way which you won't have seen before.

For 90 minutes, Bloom's flighty yarns line up to be told in flashback – McGregor playing Young Ed with a spot-on air of naïve exuberance. He suffers a freakish growth spurt ("gigantificationism"), befriends a lonely giant, joins the circus, meets a witch (Helena Bonham Carter) and wanders into a celestial smalltown where Steve Buscemi is the (terrible) local

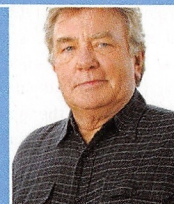
poet. All of this is played out through Burton's sumptuous sense of visual melodrama (time literally stands still during a love-at-first-sight epiphany), until the final half-hour sees the director expertly fade out the fantasy ready for an emotional sucker-punch of an ending. It's a good job too, the shift occurring just as the colours are threatening to run, the weird giving way to whimsy.

EXTRAS A solid package headed up by an excellent 'Making Of' – judging by the shots of McGregor and Burton hunched around the rushes, howling and high-fiving, it was a laugh to make. There's also a decent enough trivia quiz and a 'Fish Tales' toggle on/off (pops up fishy icons throughout the film, which jump to the relevant spots in the Making Of).

VERDICT A hint of *Princess Bride*, a touch *Wizard Of Oz*, a pinch of *It's A Wonderful Life* – cynics may gag, but few films aim for both the heart and the imagination with such warmth and audacity. A credible feel-good movie and one that Burton fans should rejoice in.

★★★★★ Jamie Russell

ALBERT FINNEY



Big Fish's story-spinning daddy on tales, ties and the great gig in the sky.

Are you something of a raconteur in real life then?

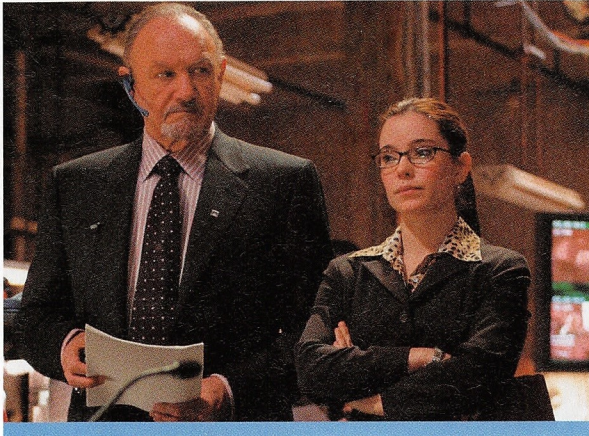
Not really. I'm very mundane and ordinary. I tend to tell stories very practically – I think it's because an actor's job is to simply interpret the stories of screenwriters.

Big Fish explores a father/son relationship. Were you were very close to your dad?

He was a good man who gave me tips. When I was a teen, he said: "Don't be in a rush to shave. The more you shave, the more you have to shave. Take your time." Useful stuff like that.

Death also plays a major part in Big Fish. Are you scared of dying?

We never know when our natural span is going to end, so we can't prepare for it. I'm 68 and I still feel immortal. I know I'm nearer the end than the beginning, but I haven't considered it really.



RUNAWAY JURY

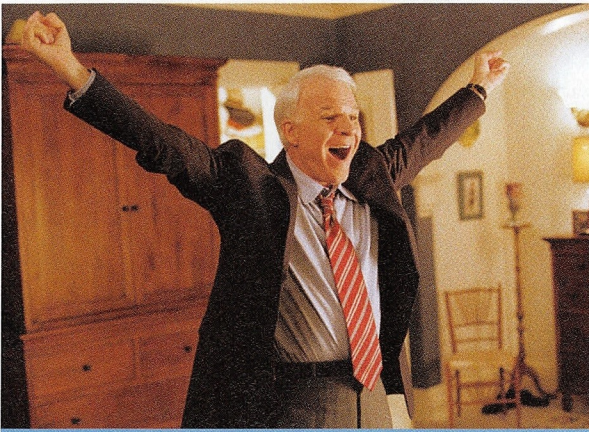
Starring John Cusack Director Gary Fleder Year 2004 Price £15.99 Released June 14

Like Schwarzenegger in a nappy, *Runaway Jury* is as taut as it is preposterous. Its central pivot is Wendell Rohr (Dustin Hoffman), an attorney desperate to force the gun lobby into accepting responsibility for firearm-related deaths. Standing in his path is professional jury manipulator Rankin Fitch (Gene Hackman). Playing out like a faintly ridiculous game of high-stakes court poker, the ante upped by John Cusack's crooked jury member and his scheming girlfriend (Rachel Weisz), this latest Grisham adaptation covers its implausibilities with slick pacing and heavyweight acting.

EXTRAS An excellent package. The highlight, though, is an improvised interview given by the two stars.

VERDICT A typical Grisham plotline but with a decent cast that manages to maintain the quick pace.

★★★★★ Jon Brown



CHEAPER BY THE DOZEN

Starring Steve Martin Director Shawn Levy Year 2003 Released Out now

Steve Martin coughs up his *Parenthood* performance in this smug kid-com. Martin plays Tom Baker – a loving father forced to choose between tending his dozen sprogs and taking up his dream job as the coach of the college football team.

Mildly funny when it sticks to being a comedy, *Cheaper By The Dozen* goes sadly awry when it asks us to feel sorry for Tom and his improbably beautiful family: only Auntie Hollywood could expect us to sympathise as the clan frets over which massive house they should live in, the one in the city or the one in the country.

EXTRAS Director Shawn Levy's commentary is upstaged by a second yak-track, during which a seemingly infinite number of child actors shout for attention. Four tech-heavy featurettes, 11 deleted scenes and storyboard-to-screen comparisons complete a good package.

VERDICT Cheap and cheerful, maybe, but then so was *Daddy Day Care*.

★★★★★ Jon Brown



THE LORD OF THE RINGS: THE RETURN OF THE KING

2-DISC THEATRICAL EDITION

The biggest show on Middle-Earth comes to a rousing finale.

Starring Elijah Wood Director Peter Jackson Year 2003 Released Out now

"We come at last", intones Gandalf, "to the great battle of our time". It sounds like the worst kind of marketing hype dressed up as a stirring morale booster. But with *The Return Of The King*, Peter Jackson delivers on that promise.

Hurting forwards from where *The Two Towers* left off – Helms Deep, lest you forget – *ROTK* continues to skip between characters and plotlines as our fractured fellowship scrabbles towards Mount Doom to destroy the One Ring. Their paths are littered with monumental dangers (ghostly warriors, super-spider Shelob, the ferocious battle at Pelennor Fields), but, through it all, Jackson never loses sight of the smaller moments, the minor tragedies. How else could Sam materialise as the true hero, Sean Astin emerging from the wringer as the proud owner of an awards-worthy (though sadly overlooked) performance?

Yet for all the poignant musings on greed and sacrifice, heroism and friendship, this final instalment to an historic trilogy will be most remembered for its awe-inspiring, enormous

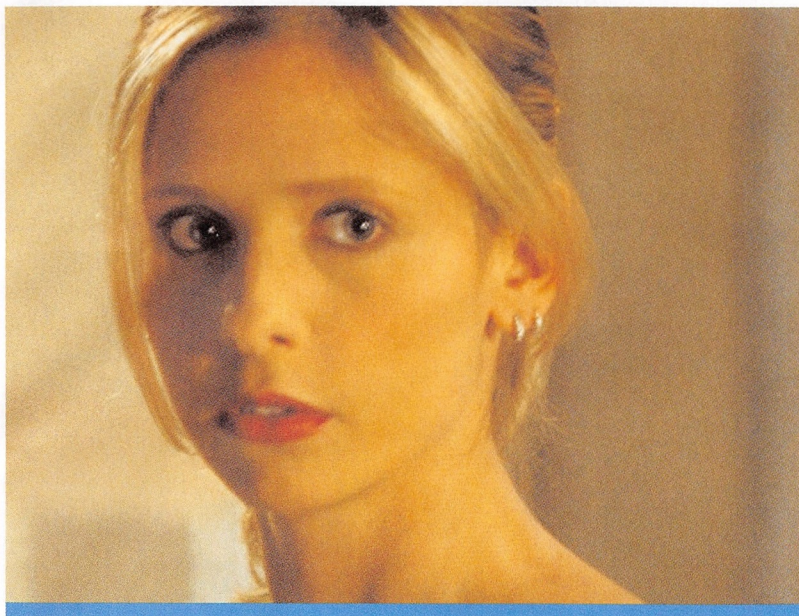
battle. Gigantic Nazgûl-ridden beasts pluck horses from the ground. Mumakils stamp on men and Orcs, splattering them into the hard mud. And thousands upon thousands of armed warriors clash with enough force to shake Middle-Earth all the way to Wellington. It's a triumph of computer effects, WETA's groundbreaking CGI throwing us straight into the heart of the bloody combat. If there are nits to be picked, it's that Aragorn's victory, via the help of some spook supporters, comes just a little too easily, and the ending (or endings) feel overstuffed as Jackson sticks barnacle-like to the book's final chapters.

EXTRAS *The Quest Fulfilled: A Director's Vision* is notable as it traces the origins of the project right back to eight years ago and shows how the movie originally started as a two-film pitch to Miramax, before failing and subsequently being re-born as the current triumphant trilogy. A fan's dream.

VERDICT A film that takes incredible strides.

★★★★★ Jamie Russell





BUFFY THE VAMPIRE SLAYER: THE COMPLETE SEVENTH SEASON

With Buffy gone and Angel soon to follow, what exactly are we supposed to watch on TV these days? The NEWS?

Starring Sarah Michelle Gellar, James Marsters **Director** Various **Year** 2003 **Released** May 26

With the announcement that Season 7 would see the end of Buffy The Vampire Slayer the loyal fan base went into overdrive searching for the clues that would piece together the end to a series that's storyline took more twists and turns than vampires it managed to stake. While the last 60 minutes lived up to the expectation, sadly the middle of the season got lost somewhere along the way.

With Joss Whedon off shooting the already failed (and never to screen in Australia) Firefly the co-executive producers bumbled and fumbled their way around handling the growing cast. Some episodes seeming pointless and previously instrumental characters were left to hang around waiting others to finish longwinded speeches. Xander minus the boyish charm is misdirected into the role of the father figure as Andrew steps up as the new dumber and camper Xander. Still you have to love Andrew!

While the base characters all play their moments well and a few from the past re-emerge Buffy is lost behind the hoards of annoying girls known simply as the Potential's. Forcing her to

step forward every moment she can to pompously restate – there is only one Slayer!

Don't get me wrong – it's not all substandard this season. Sub plots like the changing relationship between Buffy and Spike and Willow's recovery add a nice everyday feel to story with a couple of the stand alone episodes making it into my Top 10. Episode 16 'Storyteller' is the equivalent of the all-singing, all-dancing episode from Season 6 as Super Villain and all around Geek Andrew takes a video camera to the lives within Scooby central. It's brilliantly funny and saves the show from becoming way too melancholy.

EXTRAS As with previous *Buffy* seasons, extras are fairly standard and include commentaries, character bios and outtakes. The commentary for 'The Chosen' episode is a particular highlight here.

VERDICT Not quite up to the standard set by earlier seasons, but still classic *Buffy*. Fans wanting to round out their collections absolutely need to buy this.

★★★★★ Vanessa Morgan



SCARY MOVIE 3

Starring Pamela Anderson **Director** David Zucker **Year** 2002 **Released** 14 June

"No Mercy. No Shame. No Sequel" promised the tagline of the original *Scary Movie*. Boy, did they lie. Three films in and the formula's as stale as a dead man's fart. Anna Faris is the TV reporter who uncovers a story involving cursed videotapes from 'The Ring', crop-circling aliens from *Signs* and white rappers from that terrifying Eminem horror movie *8 Mile*. The script writers have run out of scary movies and are left with a bag of bizarre in-jokes from any recent blockbuster. *Scary Movie 4* will surely have to parody itself unless more horrors are forthcoming.

EXTRAS "It's kind of like *Sophie's Choice* meets *Spider-Man 2*" is how actress Regina Hall describes the film in *Making Scary Movie 3: For Real*. Fortunately, she's only kidding, as this is a hilarious spoof featurette containing far more yuk-yuks than the movie itself.

VERDICT A sequel too far – *Scary Movie 3* runs out of horror movies to parody and becomes a incredible farce.

★★★★★ Jamie Russell



PARTY MONSTER

Starring Macaulay Culkin **Director** Fenton Bailey **Year** 2003 **Released** Out now

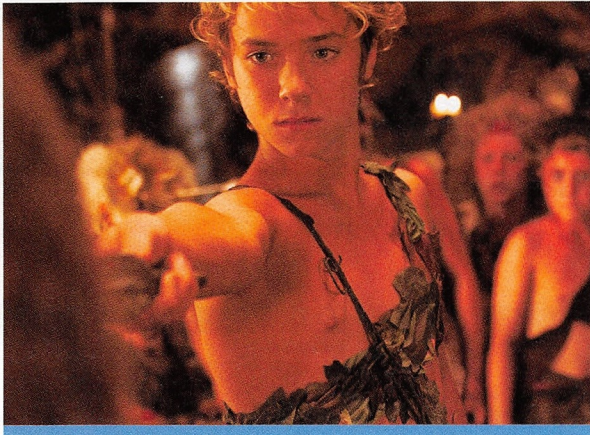
The revelry fiend in question is mincing club-kid Michael Alig (Macaulay Culkin). This film tracks his real-life hedonism among the hotspots of '80s New York, which spiralled into drugs and murder.

A small-town Idaho boy who teamed up with club diva James St James (Seth Green), Alig became a celebrity for his parties before brutally bashing his drug dealer over the head with a hammer. An intriguing tale, undoubtedly, but don't expect any insight into Alig's motives and his Warholian excess: this shallow, lazy and annoying dud of a drama amounts to little more than Green and Culkin unconvincingly queening it up in a series of ridiculous outfits, looking like Boy George heading to a fancy dress party in Ibiza. Intellectually shallow and unintentionally comical.

EXTRAS Trailers and an average commentray.

VERDICT A hollow and overly sensational tale with little to recommend.

★★★★★ Jamie Graham



PETER PAN

Starring Jason Isaacs Director PJ Hogan Year 2003 Price £19.99 Released Out now

As faithful as it is to JM Barrie's children's romp, PJ Hogan's film is all ingredients and no cake. Sure, once you get past the overly-synthetic Neverland you'll find groovy designs and effects, with Peter's shadow taking on vivid life and the mermaids exuding plentiful menace. The cast don't slouch either, Jason Isaacs hamming up Hook and Ludivine Sagnier making for an irascible Tink. The problem is that Hogan simply soups up an old, old story without adding any fresh magic to it. The result is something that potters along amiably without really taking flight.

EXTRAS A modest menu, divided into the film's various locations, opens up a plethora of backstage banterings, outtakes, interviews and alternative endings.

VERDICT Special effects packed retelling of a story you've seen before, only done considerably better. Purely a rental possibility.

★★★★★ Kevin Harley



FREAKY FRIDAY

Starring Jamie Lee Curtis Director Mark Waters Year 2003 Released Out now

'Family comedy'. The term inspires fear. Add the word 'remake' and you've got a sentence like community service: portentous, painful and pointless. Not this time. *Freaky Friday* is a smart, slick makeover of the nostalgia-bathed '70s original. A likeable Lindsay Lohan steps into Jodie's shoes, playing a hygienically grungy teen who supernaturally swaps bodies with Jamie Lee Curtis' middle-aged mum. Lohan has a lot of fun aping the older actress but Curtis steals most of the scenes, crying of her post-switch self, "I'm like the Cryptkeeper!" before bounding through the join-the-dots action with a performance of witty self-deprecation.

EXTRAS Two barely changed alternative endings, a disposable deleted scene, music videos, bloopers and sprightly, Lohan-hosted featurette.

VERDICT A Disney film safe enough to show the kids and funny enough (just) to sit through with a partner.

★★★★★ Daniel Webb



PLANET OF THE APES 35TH ANNIVERSARY SPECIAL EDITION

The primates walk tall again in this simian, Swiftian sci-fi satire...

Starring Charlton Heston, Roddy McDowall, Kim Hunter Director J Schaffner Year 1968 Released Out now

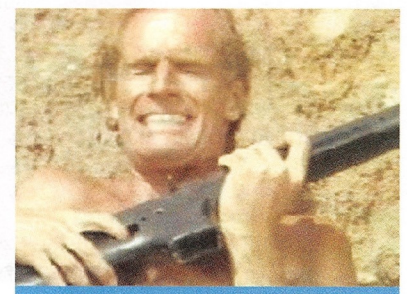
"You cut up his brain, you bloody baboon!", Charlton Heston shouts at some malevolent monkey in the 1968 adaptation of Pierre Boulle's novel. Decades on, he might have said something similar to Tim Burton, who 're-imagined' the film (minus the minor matter of much imagination) as a regressive soup of special effects, screeching social satire, Mark Wahlberg and similarly surface-level-only nonsense. Give us those old PG Tips ads any day. Thankfully, three decades later, the original remains the thinking chimp's conceptual sci-fi movie. From subtext to design, make-up to apeing-up, crash-landing to rude-awakening final twist, it's fully realised, witty and superbly sustained. On the one hand, it's a classic genre piece, hinting at themes of faith and science; on the other, it's a key time-capsule of the Cold War-cum-Vietnam era. Little wonder that, in Charlton Heston's opening monologue, his Taylor is happy to leave the 20th century behind. In 1968, the world surely didn't seem much less of a madhouse than the one he lands on, a forbidding

planet where evolution has gone AWOL. From there, the film works every angle beautifully. The hierarchy of the ape society is keenly considered, the characterisation of the simians is rich and clear. Even through John Chambers' ape designs, Roddy McDowall, Kim Hunter and Maurice Evans give expressive performances. The script is packed with zingers, too, from "Human see, human do" to "But you're so damn ugly!", when hairy Chuck plants a kiss on Hunter's chimp. As for the twist, it's an example of smart audience duping that easily has the edge on, say, *The Sixth Sense* in terms of sheer resonance.

EXTRAS The key offering is the excellent *Behind The Planet Of The Apes*, a two-hour documentary narrated by Roddy McDowall.

VERDICT If the banana-gobbling remake can't dent the film's reputation, any other minor quibbles aren't going to knock it out of the trees. Even after all these years, it still stands on its own two feet.

★★★★★ Kevin Harley



GAME BREAKER

■ Delivering the best tips and cheats for the biggest games every month.

MX UNLEASHED



This stunt bike title comes with some powerful cheats built in. All you have to do is enter them at the password screen to see what we mean.

500cc BIKES
BIGDOGS

50cc BIKES
SQUIRRELDG

A.I. BOWLING
WRECKINGBALL

ALL BONUSES UNLOCKED
CLAPPEDOUT

EXPERT A.I.
OBTGFAST

FREESTYLE TRACKS
BUSTBIG

NATIONAL TRACKS
ECONATION

PRO PHYSICS
SWAPPIN

Cheat of the Month

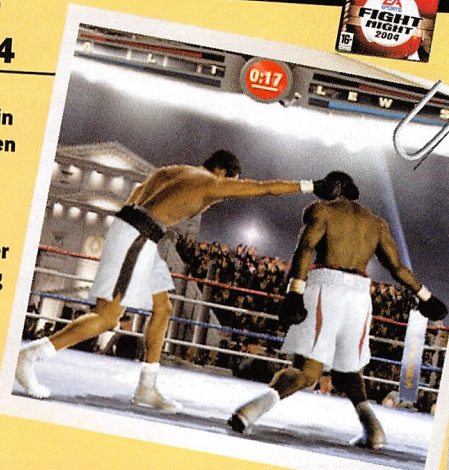
FIGHT NIGHT BOXING 2004



Getting bored boxing in scummy gyms? To open up Fight Night's swankier fighting joints, go to the main menu, select My Corner and enter the following code:

ALL VENUES

←, ←, ←, →, →,
→, ←, →, →



THE SUFFERING

There's a host of decidedly odd cheats for this horrific prison adventure, and although not all will help you, they're all fairly easy to use. During gameplay hold R1+ L1 + X and then press the following buttons to access them. Entering most of these cheats a second time will turn them off again.

ACID MODE

← x2, R2, → x2, R2, ↑ x2, R2,
↓ x2,

BRAND NEW FAMILY PICTURE

↑, →, ↑, →, ↑, →, R2,

FAMILY PIC DIRTY, BLOODY AND WRINKLED

←, ↓, ←, ↓, ←, ↓, R2,

BLACK AND WHITE

↑, R2, ←, R2, ↓, R2, →, R2,

GET GONZO GUN

←, R2, R2, R2, →, ←, →, ←,
↑, R2, R2, R2, ↓, ↑, ↓, ↑, R2,

REFILL CURRENT THROW WEAPON AMMO

←, ←, ↑, ↓, →, ←, →, →, R2,

XOMBIUM BOTTLE FULL

→, →, ↑, ↑, R2, ←, →, R2,
→, ↑, →, R2,

FULL HEALTH METER

↓, ↓, ↓, R2, ↑, ↑, ↓, ↓, ↑, R2,

GET ALL WEAPONS AND ITEMS EXCEPT THE GONZO GUN

↓, ↑, ↓, ←, →, ←, R2, ↑,
←, ↓, →, ↑, →, ↓, ←, R2,
↓, ↓, ↓, R2, R2,

OVERCOME INSANITY

→ x3, R2, ← x2, →, ←, R2,



NEED FOR SPEED UNDERGROUND



If you're 'tyring' of the normal courses, enter these codes at the main menu to get your hands on all the tracks you need. You filthy cheat, you.

ALL CIRCUIT TRACKS

↑, R1(3), R2(3), ■,

ALL DRAG TRACKS

→, ■, ←, R1, ■, L1, L2, R2,

ALL DRIFT TRACKS

←(4), →, R2, R1, L2,

ALL SPRINT TRACKS

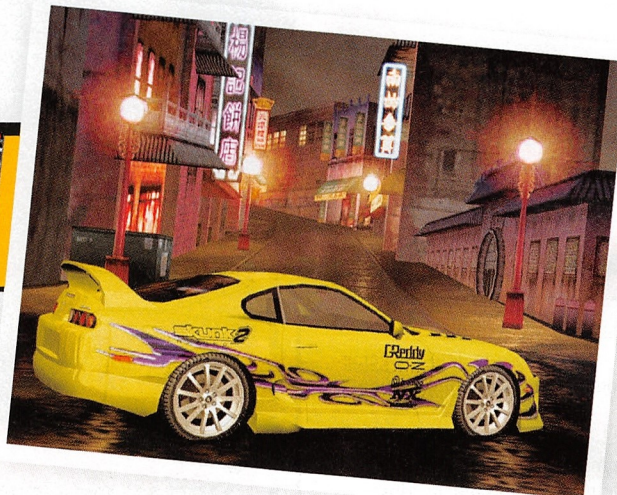
↑, R2(3), R1, ↓(3),

DRIFT PHYSICS FOR ALL CARS

R1, ↑(3), ↓(3), L1,

ALL ACCESSORIES AND BODY PARTS

Complete Underground mode



AGGRESSIVE INLINE



Enter these codes in at the Cheats password entry screen located in the options menu. The ones with arrows just need the arrows symbols on the screen inserted instead of letters. You'll see what we mean when you do it. Kudos for including the 'classic' Konami cheat to open up all levels, immediately below...

ALL LEVELS AND EDITOR THEMES

↑, ↑, ↓, ↓, ←, →, ←, →, BABA

ALL SECRET CHARACTERS

↓, →, →, ↓, ←, ↓, ←, ↓, →, →, →,

INVULNERABILITY

KHUFU

JUICE BAR FULL AT ALL TIMES

BAKABAKA

LOW GRAVITY WALL-RIDE

↑, ↓, ↑, ↓, ←, →, ←, →, ABABS

PERFECT GRINDS

BIGUPYASELF

PERFECT HAND-PLANT

JUSTIN BAILEY

PERFECT MANUALS

QUEZDONTSLLEEP

REGENERATING JUICE METER

←, ←, →, →, ←, →, ↓, ↑, ↑, ↓, AI

TEENAGE MUTANT NINJA TURTLES



This mass of codes should help liven up the rather dull Turtles beat 'em up. Enter them as passwords on the password screen.

ALTERNATE SOUND EFFECTS

DDMML

DONATELLO GETS DOUBLE DEFENCE

MLMLS

DONATELLO GETS DOUBLE POWER-UP EFFECTS

MLSDS

IMPROVED WEAPON FOR DONATELLO

DRLDS

IMPROVED WEAPON FOR LEONARDO

LMLSD

IMPROVED WEAPON FOR MIKE

MSRMM

IMPROVED WEAPON FOR RAPHAEL

RDSRL

JONES MODE

SRLMD

LEONARDO GETS DOUBLE DEFENCE

LDSMS

LEONARDO GETS DOUBLE POWER-UP EFFECTS

RSDMM

LEONARDO HAS UNLIMITED FIRE SHURIKENS

SSLDM

UNLOCK SPLINTER IN STORY MODE

MSRLS

MIKE GETS DOUBLE DEFENCE

RLDDR

MIKE GETS DOUBLE POWER-UP EFFECTS

RLMSM

MIKE GETS UNLIMITED FIRE SHURIKENS

MSSLD



ASK THE BOFFIN

Your queries fed direct into the giant cranium of our resident games boffin.

RAINBOW WARRIOR

I used a guide I found on the internet to try and complete *Rainbow Six 3*, but for some reason it's got some of the middle sections missing! Why haven't they bothered to put them in?

Whinging Wanker, Newcastle

BOFFIN >> Aha, my ignorant friend. You have been using old Xbox guides. The PS2 version has a couple of extra levels in the middle. In future, make sure that the guide you're reading has been written explicitly for the PS2 version and your woes shall be solved.

BEAST INFECTION

I can't defeat Parasite Dragon on the last bit of *Hack Infection* and it's driving me completely freakin' insane. What the hell do I do?

Iain Gare, Penrith

BOFFIN >> Ooh, ooh, an adventure game! Nothing warms the cockles of my clockwork heart so much. Except maybe the Dewey-decimal system. Fear not Mr Gare, help is at hand. Send in Black Rose and Gardenia to attack the beast, then resurrect them and keep them alive no matter what happens. You'll need 25 resurrections at least. Use the Rip Maen spell to save your assets, and data drain him when you get the chance. Elementary!

OFF ON THE WRONG FOOT

In *LMA Manager 2004*, I spend all my cash on players who never seem to cut it after a few years. What am I doing wrong?

Phil Hallis, Rockhampton

BOFFIN >> Football is for brutish boys, but I have this advice: buy your players when they're young. Don't waste money on someone like Ryan Giggs who's at the end of his career. Choose stars in their teens. And scout them too.

SOCOM II U.S. NAVY SEALS



There's a whole load of weapons and characters to unlock here, but you'll need to complete the single-player mode to get them. You'll find them in the Extra menu after completing the right game difficulty modes.

FERAL

Complete the game under the Admiral difficulty setting.

CAPTAIN DIFFICULTY SETTING

Complete the game under the Commander difficulty setting.

ADMIRAL DIFFICULTY SETTING

Complete the game under the Commander difficulty setting.

ALL SEAL WEAPONS

Successfully complete the game under Ensign difficulty setting.

ALL TERRORIST WEAPONS

Complete the game under Lieutenant difficulty setting.

ALL SAS WEAPONS

Complete the game under Commander difficulty setting.

ALL SPETSNAZ WEAPONS

Complete the game under Commander difficulty setting.

MULTIPLE GRENADE LAUNCHER

Complete the game under Captain difficulty setting.

THE SIMPSONS HIT AND RUN



Feelin' g ever so slightly bored of this GTA-alike Simpsons title? Hold down L1 and R1 at the options screen and press the following buttons to open up a whole new world of Simpsons jalopy-related tomfoolery.

INSTANT VEHICLE EXPLOSIONS

▲ (2), ■ (2),

FAST CARS

■ (4),

VERY FAST CARS

▲ (4),

RED BRICK CAR

● (2), ▲, ■,

INVINCIBILITY

▲, ✕, ▲, ✕,

GIVE ALL CHARACTERS EXTRA HIGH JUMPING ABILITY

■ (3), ▲,

GRID MODE

●, ✕, ●, ▲,

PERMANENTLY ADD SPEEDOMETER TO ONSCREEN DISPLAY

▲ (2), ●, ■,

GONE
BUT NOT
FORGOTTEN

Classic game
cheats dug up
and dusted off!



MEDAL OF HONOR: FRONTLINE

This wartime classic still wows us now. Enter these codes on the Enigma machine, but don't forget to select or deselect them in the bonus menu.

ONE HIT KILLS

WHATYOUGET

GET GOLD MEDAL

MONKEY

RANDOM OBJECTS ON HEADS

HABRDASHR

UNLOCK LEVEL 2

ORANGUTAN

GOLD ON PREVIOUS LEVEL

TIMEWARP

UNLOCK LEVEL 3

BABOON

ALL MISSIONS, CHEATS AND EXTRAS

DAWOIKS

UNLOCK LEVEL 4

CHIMPZEE

MOHTON TORPEDO MODE

TPDOMOHTON

UNLOCK LEVEL 5

LEMUR

BULLETS DO NO DAMAGE

BULLETZAP

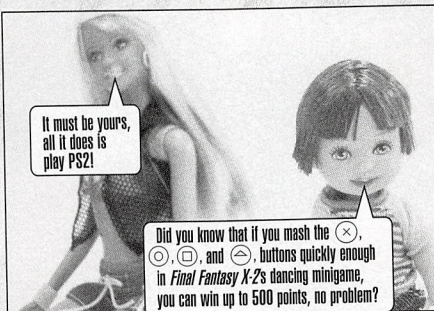
UNLOCK LEVEL 6

GORILLA



PSW's photo casebook

Scott's baby blues



GameCube

Xbox

PC

Playstation 2

Game Boy Advance

Sonic

**YOUR GUIDE TO THE
FUTURE OF GAMING
AND BEYOND!**

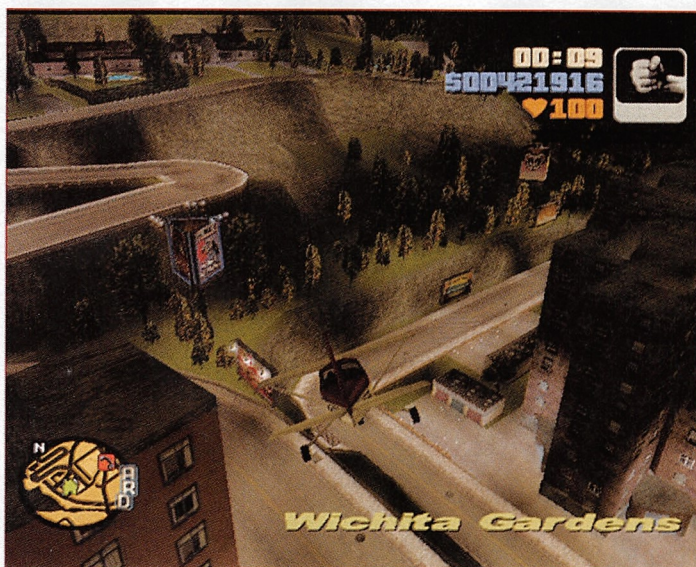
HYPER»

AUSTRALIA'S GAMING AUTHORITY



23 THINGS TO SEE AND DO IN GRAND THEFT AUTO 3

You've evaded the police, shot the Mafia to bits and smashed the cartels. Now it's time to bend the rules till they break and jump up and down on the pieces.



01 FLY LIKE A BIRD

When you first sat down to play *GTA3* there's no way you would believe that you could fly. In the post *Vice City* age, no one would be seen dead without a helicopter but back in the day, the Dodo was all the kids had to get around in. Mastery of this petulant beast takes some doing but it can be achieved with a little practice.



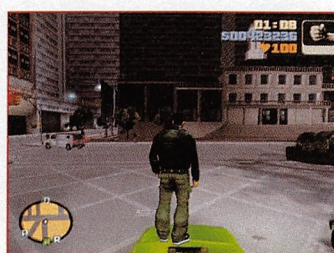
03 CHECK OUT THE GHOST TOWN

You've probably read about Ghost Island but have you actually been there? Well, even if you haven't, you can actually see it from the mainland with a little cunning and a sniper rifle by climbing up to the Observatory and having a look through the wall using the gun's scope. How exciting is that! No, really.



04 MAKE CARS FLOAT

With another slice of trickery, you can make cars float about in the air like very heavy, metal clouds. Go to the lifting bridge between Staunton Island and Shoreside Vale and stop just off the lifting section, trapping the other cars on the lifting section. When it goes up, they will float away. Mysterious.



02 TAKE TO THE ROOF AND GO CAR-SURFING

Jumping up onto a car will provide you with your own on-rails gun platform. Wait till there's a suitable car stopped at traffic lights then hop on and use a gun with a sight, such as the M-16, to cause panic as you're carried round the city like the Pope.



05 DO STUNTS IN THE DODO

Flying upside down? Flying sideways between buildings? Looping the loop? All these moves are possible in the Dodo. Just keep the movements small and controlled, and before long you'll be an aerial ace in the same vein as the original Red Baron.



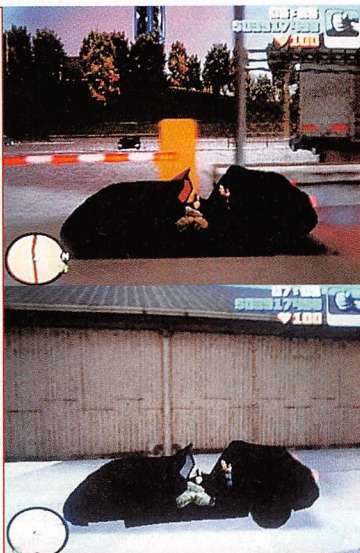
06 UNLOCK THE CRAZY BORGINE TAXI

In order to unlock one of the rarest machines in the *GTA3* universe you need to complete the Taxi Driver side mission. This entails delivering 100 passengers to their destinations. Complete the task in order to unlock the Borgine Taxi. Nasty car.



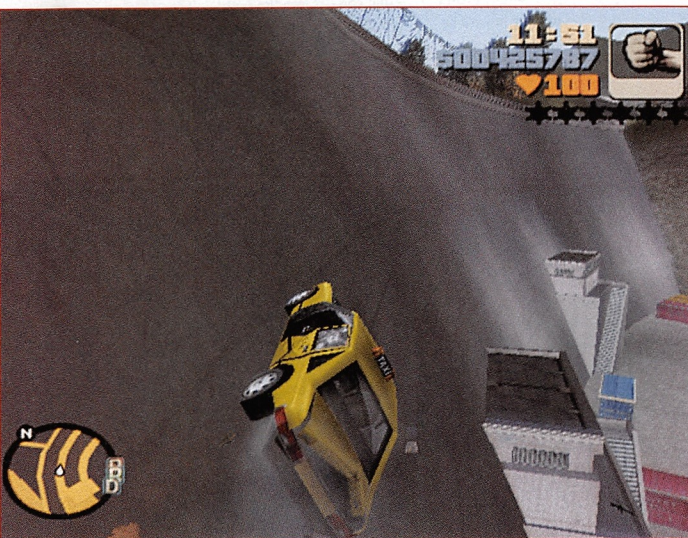
07 DRIVE A BLOWN UP CAR

It requires a cheating frenzy of the magnitude more normally associated with American teenagers, but for some highly unusual wheels to ride, try this: first use the SLOW DOWN GAME PLAY code, and then stand in front of a moving car, facing the driver. Stand slightly to the driver's side of the car and input the BLOW UP ALL CARS code, then quickly input the FULL HEALTH code. If you have done all this correctly, you should get inside the car even though it's just exploded. The health code should put out the fire, if not, just input it again. If you take the car to the Pay 'n' Spray, it'll remain blown up but it will get its wheels back.



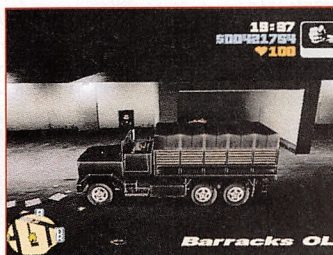
CHEAT DIRECTORY

LOWER WANTED LEVEL	02 02 01 02 ↑ ↓ ↓ ↓ ↓
HIGHER WANTED LEVEL	02 02 01 02 ← → → → →
TANK	00 00 00 00 00 00 01 02 01 00 00
FASTER GAME CLOCK	00 00 00 00 00 00 01 02 01 00 00
NEW CHARACTER COSTUME	→ ↓ ← 01 02 ↑ ← ↓
PEDESTRIANS FIGHT EACH OTHER	↓ ↑ ← 01 02 02 01 01
PEDESTRIANS ATTACK YOU	↓ ↑ ← 01 01 02 01 02
LIBERTY CITY SURVIVOR	02 01 01 02 01 ↑ ↓
FLYING VEHICLES	→ 02 01 02 ↓ 01 01
GREAT HANDLING	01 01 02 01 01 01 01
ALL WEAPONS	02 02 01 02 ← ↓ → ↑ ↓ ↑
MORE MONEY	02 02 01 01 ← ↓ → ↑ ↓ ↑
FULL ARMOR	02 02 01 02 ← ↓ → ↑ ↓ ↑
FULL HEALTH	02 02 01 01 ← ↓ → ↑ ↓ ↑
BLOW UP ALL CARS	02 02 01 01 00 00 02 01
INCREASED GORE	01 01 01 ↓ 01 01 → 01 01
SPEED UP GAME	01 ↑ → ↓ 01 02
SLOW DOWN GAME	01 ↑ → ↓ 01 02



08 DRIVE YOURSELF UP THE WALLS

By activating the GREAT HANDLING cheat, you won't just be able to turn on a sixpence; you'll also be able to drive straight up vertical walls. Try driving to the dam in Shoreside Vale. You should find yourself able to drive up the face of the dam with a powerful car. Like so much in life – real or otherwise – there's no real reason for doing this other than it looks a bit odd and is seriously good fun.



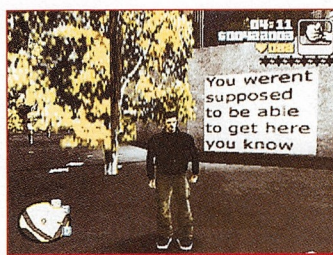
09 DRIVE AROUND IN A BULLETPROOF CAR

Bulletproof cars are useful for driving around the Mafia owned areas after you have alienated them. Steal the covered Barracks OL during the 'Arms Shortage' mission – it's the only chance you'll get to nick this huge, indestructible beast.



10 BE LIKE HAWK – GO UNDERGROUND!

Go to the Staunton Island hospital and park the Bobcat with its nose up against the blue door. Enter the SPEED UP GAMEPLAY cheat twice and run at the point where the car and door meet. You'll end up stood on the subway tunnel.



11 GO WHERE YOU WEREN'T SUPPOSED

It seems the designers expected gamers to push exploration of Liberty City to extreme levels. West of the Love building is a car park. By using a high-roofed vehicle, it's possible to get over the southern wall of the car park and reveal this poster.



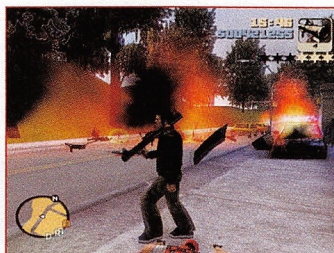
12 STEAL AN FBI CAR AND SURVIVE

Stealing a tank is so passé, but stealing an FBI car is a man's sport. Escaping in the tank you're practically invincible, while in the FBI car you're a sitting duck. There are four heavily-armed guys in an FBI car but only two in a tank.



13 STOP THE CLOCK TO WIN OFF-ROAD

The off-road missions are possibly the hardest tasks in the entire game. But if you manage to hit a checkpoint exactly as the time runs out it'll stop the clock, giving you all the time you need to finish the course. Easy when you know how.

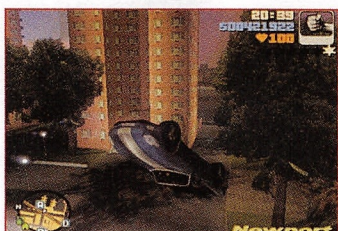


14 START A RIOT AND UNLEASH ANARCHY

Input the LIBERTY CITY SURVIVOR cheat to turn the fair highways of Liberty City into a war zone. Now everybody in the whole city will be armed and dangerous, giving you a sneak peek of life after the revolution.



"INPUT THE LIBERTY CITY SURVIVOR CHEAT TO TURN THE FAIR HIGHWAYS OF LIBERTY CITY INTO A WARZONE."



15 COMPLETE THE PERFECT STUNT

The biggest stunt that Liberty City will recognise is a 'Perfect Triple'. This requires you to throw your car across an incredible distance, spinning like a drunk teenager on a roundabout as you go, and then somehow land on all four wheels.

CHALLENGES

Give yourself a proper *GTA* workout.



JUMP

With flagrant disregard for your own life, propel your vehicle as far into the air as possible. It's all about the distance, so keep your eyes peeled for suitable take-off spots and learn to fly.

SILVER	60 metres
GOLD	80 metres
PLATINUM	100 metres



COP KILLER

In 1984, a man wearing a black leather jacket and sunglasses killed seventeen police officers. He was called The Terminator. Can you do any better than him?

SILVER	20 dead cops
GOLD	30 dead cops
PLATINUM	40 dead cops



TAXI

Fancy yourself as a driver? See if you can match our amazing skills with a full 100 passengers delivered to their destinations in one run. No cheating or we'll be sending the boys round.

SILVER	20 passengers
GOLD	50 passengers
PLATINUM	100 passengers



TANK JACKING

Stealing a tank is easy, but can you do it without killing anyone? Get six wanted stars and then see if you can get into the tank without anyone else dying. Hard, yes – impossible, no.

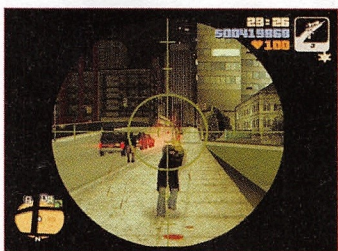
SILVER	4 deaths
GOLD	2 deaths
PLATINUM	0 deaths



STAYING ALIVE

This is all about staying alive under pressure. Get to five stars then see how long you can keep breathing. No police bribes, no hiding where you can't be shot and no cheating.

SILVER	1 minute
GOLD	3 minutes
PLATINUM	5 minutes

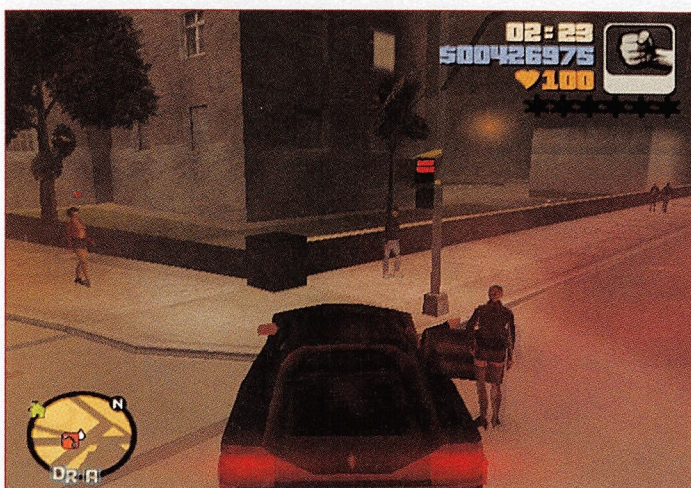


16 MAKE LIKE SPLATTERHOUSE

The INCREASED GORE cheat is a must for all medical students, or those with a passing interest in human anatomy. It'll let you perform long-range amputations, removing limbs from considerable distance with a selection of weapons.

17 FLY A TANK USING ITS GUN FOR BOOST!

With the FLYING CAR cheat, it's possible to make any car fly. The Rhino tank is a hot favourite for the simple reason that rotating the gun round to the back and firing it acts like a massive engine, making you fly faster and higher than the Dodo.



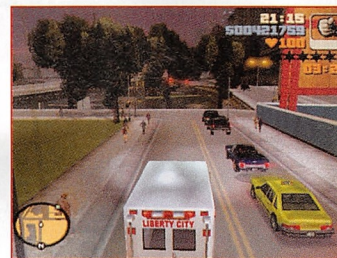
18 GET LAID FOR NOTHING

Hookers. Money. We don't really need to tell you this bit, surely?



19 GET HUGE AIR FROM A TINY CAR

Using the RC (Radio Controlled) Car and a little cheating it's possible to get the most humungous, inexplicable jumps imaginable out of the tiny little car. Enter the PEDESTRIANS FIGHT EACH OTHER cheat, the LIBERTY CITY SURVIVOR cheat and the GREAT HANDLING cheat and then drive your RC car over a dead body. You'll be thrown miles into the air for no reason whatsoever. Play about with the speed and direction to get the really huge jumps. We had great success going backward for some inexplicable reason.



20 SAVE LIVES AND RUN FOREVER

After the insanity and teeth-gnashing pain of the off-road exploits back at number 13, this ranks as the second most painfully difficult experience the game thrusts upon you. In order to get the Infinite Sprint upgrade, you have to complete level 12 of the ambulance missions. As just one unfortunate roll can see you fail at any moment, along with the teeny-weeny time limit, ensure you are thoroughly shot on a bottle of vodka before you even think of attempting this one. Your joypad/PlayStation2/TV/relationships may be at risk otherwise.



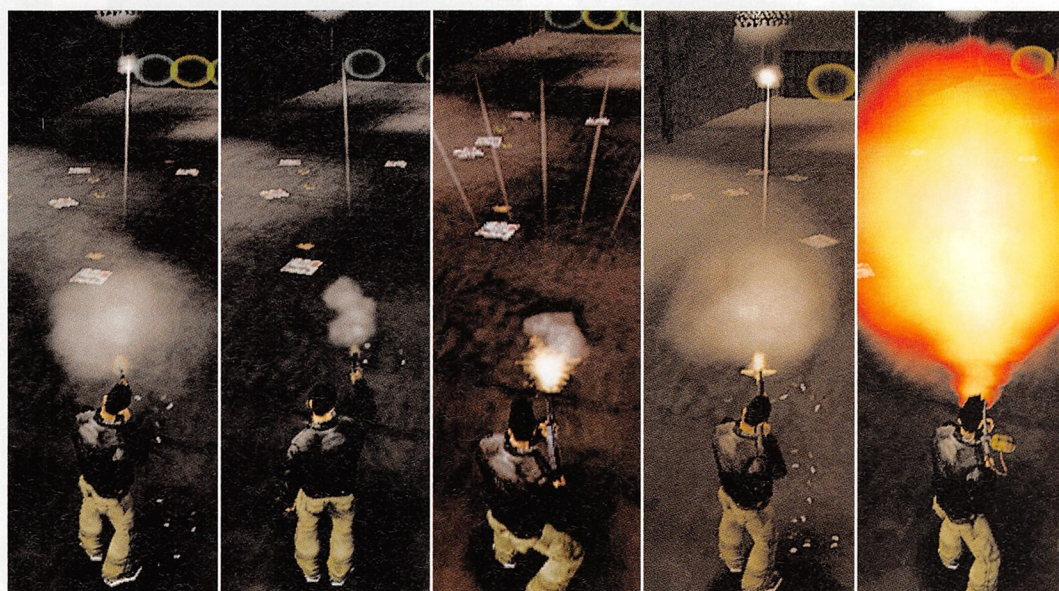
21 PLAY THE GAME AND BUY THE T-SHIRT

Can't get enough GTA3? Hop over to www.lazlow.com and pick up one of the T-shirts from his personal site. Also try www.pogothemonkey.com for more 'Is it real or is it just a dream?' moments. No, there really is a GTA3 connection. Honest!



22 BE A LADY OR A BIG GAY MAN WITH A 'TACHE

Had enough of those bland slacks? The NEW CHARACTER COSTUME cheat allows you to switch between hundreds of pedestrian skins, so you can go rampaging as a hooker, an old dear, or the PSW office favourite: a big gay man with a huge moustache. Nice.



23 BUILD YOUR OWN ARMORY (AND USE IT...)

By finding the hidden packages and completing the Fire Engine missions it's possible to build up a massive armory. When you've managed to rack up all 100 hidden packages and completed 20 fire-fighting missions on each island you'll have the following available at your base: Colt45, Uzi, Grenades, Shotgun, Armour, Molotov's, AK47, Sniper Rifle, M16, Rocket Launcher and Flame Thrower. Now don't tell us you can't find anything constructive, destructive or just plain nasty to do with a natty little collection like that at your disposal. Go on, KILL! KILL! KILL!



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